WORLD / A10
EU declares avian flu global threat; it's unstoppable via migratory birds, say experts

NEWS / A2
SC junks bid to stop NorthRail, says lower court is proper venue

SPORTS
La Salle liaison, ex-coaching staff member accused in eligibility scandal

METRO / A17
2 bogus doctors arrested in QC for botched breast surgery

How family on a P16,700 income can cope with VAT

By Norman Bordadora

LIKE MOST FILIPINOS, COUPLE SER AND Maria San Diego, both public school teachers, are bracing for harder times with the implementation of the 12-percent expanded value-added tax (VAT) law on Nov. 1.

"It's all right if we're the only ones affected, [www.ca...]

PHILIPPINE DAILY
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Senators to GMA: Collect, spend VAT revenues wisely

LAWMAKERS YESTERDAY URGED PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's administration to ease the burden of the expanded value-added tax on the people quickly by intensifying enforcement and collecting taxes efficiently and spending the revenues wisely.

Sen. Manuel "Manny" Villar Jr. pressed the issue of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs [text cut off]

Rosales backs dispersal of rally led by 3 bishops

By Christian V. Esguerra

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO ROSALES yesterday declared unequivocal support for the violent dispersal of a procession led last week by three bishops, other members of the clergy, and former Vice President Teofisto Guingona.

Rosales all but defended the Philippine National Police's use of a water cannon to disperse the procession close to past injuries had incurred on striking crowds on two occasions in Mendiola [illegible] Malacañang.

"We need a little order. A government cannot exist with a climate of anarchy," the archbishop told reporters at a press conference in his first public appearance since the implementation of the Arroyo administration's [illegible] preemptive response (CPR) policy.

"There's no such thing as absolute freedom. Every [person's] freedom is conditioned by the rights of another," he said.

Rosales said the Arroyo administration must not overact in suppressing organizers of a protest action to seek a permit from local governments and in defining the route to be taken by marchers as well as the venue of the protest.

But he told the administration it should take measure in CPR policy in the light of mounting mass protests calling for the Arroyo's resignation.

"If it will hurt, it's not right," he said, adding that the march of good Christians was not the ability to accept criticism.

Since early this month, units of police have been employing the water cannon approach [illegible]

To protect bodyguard, Jamby offers marriage

By Luige B. del Puerto

IF THERE ARE ANY LIMITS to the sacrifices a man will make for his bodyguard, Sen. Jamby Madrigal is, at least, willing to find out.

Madrigal asked Chief Supt. Edgardo Clemente "Gardo" Tan [illegible]

The setting wasn't exactly perfect for a wedding. The [illegible]

WHAT'S THE BOY? The unusual sight of Sen. Jamby Madrigal (who presents to the media pose) after violent engagement with activist cops on Friday. At right is her security, PO3 Ray Manalo, whose pistol fell during the rally dispersed by water cannon.

Bunye eyed as media czar

Swiss firm allows others to produce its antiflu drug

BASEL, SWITZERLAND—THE Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche appeared to bend to Chinese demand for its antiflu drug Tamiflu on Thursday, saying it was now ready to clear production on a highly pathogenic form of avian influenza reached Europe.

In an apparent turnaround, Roche announced that it was open [illegible] to allow other companies or governments to produce Tamiflu, which is considered a first line of defense against a potential flu pandemic.

It also announced that it would go ahead with a new facility to produce the drug in the United States, following approval from the US Food and Drug Administration.

"We are prepared to discuss all this [illegible] options, including granting sub-licenses, with any government or private company [illegible]

CAMIGUIN'S SWEETEST HARVEST
With a smile as sweet as the fruits her province is famous for, a dancer from the Camiguin Polytechnic State College offers a basket of lanzones to President Arroyo, who's the special guest during the opening of the 26th Camiguin Lanzones Festival on Wednesday at the Benigno S. Aquino Park in Barangay Poblacion, Mambajao, Camiguin.

GMA going against advice of Bro. Mike

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Julie Luteng Javellana

TO THINK THAT EL Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde had advised President Macapagal-Arroyo that she needed a "better" spokesperson than the one she had.

Despite his [illegible] handling of the "Hello, Garci" tape scandal, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye will apparently be retained by the President with an appointment as the [illegible] of Malacañang's entire communications and media machinery.

According to a Palace insider, Bunye is scheduled to be named head of a new department, the Presidential Communications Group (PCG), which is being designed to replace the Office of the Communications Director (OCD) that was quietly abolished a few weeks ago.

The source said Bunye himself and Rigoberto Tiglao, chief of the Presidential Management Staff, were drafting the executive order creating the PCG.

The bayonne yesterday asked Bunye to confirm the supposed [illegible]

SMILE, YOU'RE ON CANDID CAMERA

Palace adopts 'Big Brother' strategy at Mendiola

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG IS ADOPTING A "Big Brother" strategy in fighting back protesters by putting up [illegible] cameras [illegible] [illegible] Mendiola Bridge.

This was revealed yesterday by Malacañang officials who were here on the meeting the heads of the police background of Sen. Jamby Madrigal. The man was caught on film carrying a gun during the dispersal by water cannon of Fr. Dan's prayer rally.

National Capital Region Police Office Chief Nihal Quezon said that aside from shields, helmets, [illegible] batons and water cannons, the anti-riot police would be equipped with video cameras to deter trouble makers during demonstrations.

"I have directed that there should be more video footage in rallies," Quezon said.

The strategy is a takeoff from the Big Brother's totalitarian society where George Orwell outlined in his popular book, "1984." Here, the state censors everyone's [illegible] and thoughts.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said video cameras would now be part of the police arsenal after the parties have got a clear footage of the actions of police on Friday [illegible]

HEHHH! In by-turo columns of policewomen, the "Hyatt 10" and other like-minded citizens march in single file toward San Pedro Chapel for a prayer rally via Mendiola.

THE LONG MARCH (Labelapan) of the Bagong Alyansa Makabayan from Lagunas to their destination in Barbosan Church in Paranaque takes flow at the Makapi Expres Road.

Hyatt 10 don't only get to Mendiola, cops escort them

By Leila B. Salaverria, Tina G. Santos and Jocelyn Uy

[illegible] former Vice President Salvi, named 30 prominent [illegible] white roses and led by former Cabinet secretaries of President Macapagal-Arroyo succeeded.

The protesters marched in a single file across Claro Recto [illegible]

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2005
WEATHER FORECAST
Second FRONTPAGE

SC junks bid to stop NorthRail

Says lower court is proper forum for squatters' petition

By Armand N. Nocum and Cynthia D. Balana

THE SUPREME COURT HAS DISMISSED THE PETITION by a group of squatters seeking to halt the P6.6-billion NorthRail railway project in Bulacan, on the ground that the high court was the wrong forum to tackle the issue.

"This court is not a trier of facts," said the high court in a decision dated Oct. 10 and signed by Clerk of Court Ma. Lourdes D. Villaruma.

The high court said the petitioners, the League of Urban Poor for Action (Lupa) and the UP Law Center, should seek relief from the lower court or the Court of Appeals as the resolution of the issues that they raised "[required] the establishment of facts here."

The petitioners asked the tribunal to void the NorthRail project, claiming it did not go through the required public bidding and was overpriced.

The UP Law Center claimed that the Lupa on procurement should have applied to the NorthRail project as it involved a joint agreement between two corporations, the state-owned North Luzon Railways Corp. and the China National Machinery and Equipment Corp. Group (CNMEC), rather than between two

(continued on page 2)

Credentials questioned

The NorthRail project's first phase involves the rehabilitation of the 32-km railway line from North Caloocan City to Malolos, Bulacan, using a loan from China's export-import Bank (Eximbank).

The contract for the railway was awarded to the China-based Clirtec Construction Machinery and Equipment Corp. (CNMEC), whose co-

(continued on page 2)

dervishes (the petitioners have questioned.

Among the facts that the court said needed to be established in a trial court were: whether a competitive bidding was held, whether public funds were appropriated for the project, whether CNMEC was a bona fide contractor in China, and whether the proper procedure for the relocation of squatters in the project areas were followed.

The high court said it was dismissing the petition "without prejudice to it's re-filing in the appropriate trial court."

Lawyer Harry B. Roque, who led the group of UP lawyers in filing the petition, deplored the decision and said the petitioners would file a motion for reconsideration.

"This is in areas of law, not in areas of fact," he said.

He said that unlike the high court, the lower courts cannot issue a temporary restraining order against infrastructure projects of the government.

He said the decision would remove the legal impediments to the squatter relocation and the demolition of their dwellings.

"By the time the issue is brought back to the Supreme Court, the houses of the informal settlers would have all been demolished," Roque said in a telephone interview.

He asked the high court to order a temporary halt to the project as the arguments have already been tuned "broken to results."

Squatter relocation

Vice President Noli de Castro, who is in charge of the government's relocation program for the NorthRail project, welcomed the decision but stressed that the legal issues raised by the petitioners is the case had nothing to do with the relocation of squatters.

"The petitioner can still raise the legal questions before a lower court. However, the government will proceed with the relocation of the affected families regardless of the outcome of the case," he said.

He said that surveys of the Bulacan areas affected by the project have decided that the displaced residents were preferring their relocation.

Congressman Rodolfo Antonino Cruz said all the moves in the affected section in Bulacan had signed a resolution of support for the relocation as well as the NorthRail project.

The mayor said the relocation program would solve the decades-long problem of squatting in the affected areas.

Named respondents in the case were Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Budget Secretary Romulo Neri, Socio-Economic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos, the North Luzon Railways Corp. and CNMEC.

Apart from the group of UP lawyers, the other petitioners were the Urban Poor for Action, Bulacan Urban Poor Federation, Bilocan ng Maralita sa Meycauayan, and the Iraq Informal Settlers Association.

AMENDING THE CHARTER

Concom chair sees plebiscite next year

By John Laureo Jacobus

ABUEVA

THE CONSTITUENTIAL COMMISSION ON Charter revision sees the holding of a plebiscite for the shift to a parliamentary-federal system of government and other amendments of the 1987 Constitution as early as next year.

But despite the early timetable, Concom Chair Jose Abueva said it was too early to answer the question hogging both opposition and administration allies whether President Macapagal-Arroyo would agree to have her six-year term cut short to pave the way for the shift to a new system of government by 2007.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and religious leaders, including El Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde who are working a solution to the political crisis arising from charges Mrs Arroyo cheated in the 2004 elections, have talked about the need for her to step down by 2007. The President has not made any public pronouncement about that.

"I don't want to speculate on that. It's very premature [to talk about]," Abueva said in a phone interview after the Oppositors' Forum strategy sessions would result in Mrs Arroyo stepping down before her term is over.

Casting GMA term

Abueva said the President has not made any statement about that when she convened the 35-member Concom and met its members. Neither did she make any hint on that when she met the Concom members for the first time in Malacañang the other night.

"No, but not at all," Abueva said.

Abueva said De Guzman would eventually deal with the President's late when it comes the question of how to shift from the presidential-unitary form of government to the new system.

"Essentially we have to finish that before we have to have a transitory provision on how to shift to the parliamentary-federal system, but we are in the early stages and that will probably be done on the last weeks," Abueva said.

For Congress considerations

Abueva said the 35-member Concom was debating on various ways to shift to the proposed amendments by Dec. 15, the deadline set by President Arroyo. The President created the commission to study Charter change, and said she would submit its report to congress for consideration during the Charter's change deliberations.

So far, Concom committees have recommended the shift to a parliamentary and federal system of government, as well as specific economic amendments including the lifting of restrictions on foreign ownership of media and business corporations.

Palace says it's powerless on Bro. Mike's referendum

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG CANNOT DO ANYTHING about El Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde's proposal for a referendum to hold a plebiscite in 2006 or to determine whether President Macapagal-Arroyo should step out-at the end of her term in 2010 or run it short.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday that it was Congress and not Malacañang that would decide whether to review such as a referendum should take place.

Velarde made the referendum proposal in an effort to help address the political crisis that continues to haunt the Arroyo administration.

He said that the proposal could be a "sound democratic exercise" for the opposition to resolve the lingering political instability.

In his weekly news briefing in Malacañang, Ermita stressed Congress should be the one to take up the proposal.

"The executive branch cannot just take a position on that because it involves constitutional matters," the executive secretary said.

"Anything that pertains to the transitory can is something for the legislature to act on first," he added.

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Corruption perception traced to allegation of election fraud

By Blanche S. Rivera

A SURVEY BY THE BUSINESS ENVIRONment Watch Foundation has reaffirmed an international group's finding that the Philippines ranks high among countries mired in corruption, "but it attributed the Filipinos' growing perception of corruption to unresolved allegations of cheating in last year's presidential election.

BEW's third-quarter survey on corruption, which it released yesterday, showed that 62.66 percent of Filipinos believe that there is "severe corruption" in the country under the Arroyo government, a sharp increase from 46.1 percent the previous quarter.

Of those surveyed, 7.33 percent said corruption was "not that bad" and only 0.9 percent "not corruption" at all. Those in the Philippines was only "minimal," half of the 11.2 percent who shared the same conviction in the previous quarter.

"This is due to persistent questions of whether President Arroyo rigged the 2004 elections and used public funds to do so," BEW executive director Rosario Bella Guieb said in a statement.

She said the wife of Gen. Federicon Miguel Arroyo, who has been linked to "jueteng" operations and allegedly anomalous government deals, has "not helped to improve the state of corruption from the Arroyo administration."

"No amount of physical absence can make people forget corruption allegations against the former administration," Guieb said. "The people have not put those behind them because those allegations have yet to be resolved."

BEW said the survey was conducted from Sept. 26 to Oct. 7 and covered 1,500 respondents. It gave the survey an error margin of three percent, plus or minus.

Transparency International has ranked the Philippines 117th of 159 nations in its corruption perception index. It gave the Philippines a score of 2.5, which means "severe corruption" in a scoring system where the cleanest nations received 10.

Meanwhile, new administration legislators branded as propaganda another finding of BEW, published Wednesday, that 64.49 percent of Filipinos trust Mrs Arroyo remained than coffee through people power. The same survey showed the President's satisfaction rating had dipped to negative 74.7 percent in the third quarter of 2005 from 67.9 percent in the second quarter.

SC revives case vs DOTC, MIAA execs

By Arnold H. Hasten

THE SUPREME COURT (SC) TUESDAY ordered the Office of the Ombudsman to immediately continue its investigation of the involvement of former transportation secretary, two airport chiefs and others in the allegedly anomalous Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) Terminal 3 contract.

In a decision penned by Associate Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez, the high court directed the Ombudsman to conduct a preliminary investigation anew of the complaint filed Manila International Airport Authority (Naia Management of Service Operators (MASO) against the respondents with dispatch.

Named respondents in the graft and plunder case were former secretaries of Transportation and Communications Perfecto Abaya and Vicente Rivera Jr.; and former Manila International Airport Authority general managers Antonio Gaza and Edgardo Manda.

The high court ruled correct to dismiss the claim of Naia Solar Aviation Ground Service Operators that the case was earlier dismissed by then Ombudsman Aniano Desierto in favor of alleged "corruption" and "hastily conducted" preliminary investigation.

Abaya was charged along with the officers and employees of his firm Wintrack Holding which bagged alleged "juicy" contracts in connection with the Naia Terminal 3 project, while Rivera was charged for executing the allegedly questionable Amended and Restated Concession Agreement (ARCA).

The MRCA contained from a July 13, 1997 agreement between the government and the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. (Piatco) to build the controversial Naia 3 under a build-operate-transfer (BOT) scheme.

ABAYA

ALVAREZ

The petitioners elevated the case to the high court after Desierto dismissed the complaint on March 13, 2002, saying there was no evidence to support the charges against the respondents.

But before the court could rule on the case, it issued a decision in 2003 voiding the MRCA contract between the government and Piatco.

The high court said that in "dismissing the complaint of petitioners, the Ombudsman in effect ruled that the (ARCA) and its supplements are valid."

The high court added that the assailed resolution of the Ombudsman was obviously tainted with grave abuse of discretion.

Thus, the court said it was necessary for the Ombudsman to reinvestigate the criminal acts allegedly committed by the respondents pursuant to the assailed Piatco agreement to determine whether probable cause exists against them.

Other respondents include Diosdado Jacob, Reynaldo Rio, Lourdes Villanueva, Jose Gabriel Revilla, Jose Go, and Elpidio Mendoza, all Naia officials who allegedly helped Wintrack bag the jury deals.

Also charged were Piatco officers and directors Yeoul Yoon, Yu Chong Yong, Jefferson Cheng, James Cheng, Alfred Johnson, Arthur Vogt, Stephen Rauch, Jason L. Kanter Apilo, Rachel Rubio, Gil Consuelo, Katherine Agnes Amador, Maria Teagan, Mario Ogsimer, Mary Antonette Manalo and Rowan Hernandez.

Directors charged were Raul Elbo, Manfred Romey Henry Go, Lito Cheng, Jose Cheng, Eberhard Mueller, and Karl Ring—directors and officers of Philippine Airport and Ground Services also in connection with the alleged overbillings of Wintrack.

Many of the respondents are also facing other criminal complaints before the Sandiganbayan.

RP to become hub for Russian oil

THE PHILIPPINES IS EXPECTED to sign a deal this year to make it a hub for Asian distribution hub for oil from Russia, the world's No. 2 producer, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said yesterday.

Romulo, who travelled to Moscow last week to discuss energy cooperation with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, said Russian oil exports would be routing Manila to early December to identify locations for distribution and storage.

"We expect to have (a memorandum of understanding) signed within this year when the preliminary oil exports from Russia start the Philippines to become a hub," Romulo told a news conference.

A deal could give Manila, eager to enhance its energy security, a ready stockpile of oil to tap in an emergency while offering Russian producers the opportunity to develop markets in fast-growing Asian economies like China and India.

Romulo said locations in Subic, a port north of Manila, and in Batangas del Norte were under consideration for storage projects.

The Philippines is the newest Southeast Asian country in the Russian far East—including Sakhalin and Yakutsk in Siberia—where a substantial portion of Russian oil, natural gas and coal originates, Romulo has said.

Crude output in Russia, the second biggest producer after Saudi Arabia, has stalled this year but is expected to grow soon thanks to several new developments in the east, including Exxon Mobil Corp.'s big Sakhalin oil and gas projects.

Oil exports hit a post-Soviet high of 9.53 million barrels per day in September, Energy Minister Ivan Sechenov.

The Philippines draws most of its 330,000 bpd of crude oil from the Middle East and seeks to diversify its sources of energy in case of disruptions of supplies. Reuters

Sofa for RP's own protection — Romulo

FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY Alberto Romulo yesterday said the proposed bilateral status-of-forces agreements that would allow troops from Australia and other Southeast Asian countries to enter the country for joint antiterrorism exercises may something like the Philippines needed.

"It is necessary and [for a for our own protection. We don't want to leave ourselves open to the terrorist threat," Romulo said.

Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said the other day a draft accord with Australia was already under study and talks on similar accords with Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore were underway.

Romulo said terrorism was already a regional threat, and that even international organizations created to promote trade like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) saw the need for an anti-terrorism task force to protect its members.

"In source-terrorism, there are things we have to share as members of the United Nations," he said.

Bayan opposition bloc, Bataklin Hanon yesterday condemned the government against calling into signing an anti-terror agreement with Australia.

Such an agreement should be thoroughly examined in the context of the recent renewed pressure barring the establishment of foreign bases and foreign troops in the country, Bayan said.

Bayan, chair of the Bayan secretariat on national defense and security, said he would scrutinize any such agreement transmitted to the Senate for ratification. Vish Cenizaros and TJ Burgonio

New RP bishop named

By Christine V. Esguerra

THE VATICAN HAS APPOINTED a new prelate to assist outspoken Archbishop Oscar Cruz who's at the forefront of a crusade against illegal gambling.

Bro. Fr. Renato Mayuga, the third Filipino bishop appointed by Pope Benedict XVI, will serve as Cruz's auxiliary partner in the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan in Pangasinan.

Mayuga's appointment was announced on Sunday by Fr. Jerry Orbos, S.J. of the National Office of Media Affairs who also explained there was no connection with Cruz' advocacy that have made him "prominent in our media these days."

He said neither should it be viewed as Vatican's subtle way of telling Cruz, a vocal critic of President Macapagal-Arroyo, to quit.

Mayuga was "requested" by Vatican Papal Nuncio Antonio Franco to succeed Archbishop Oscar Cruz who's at the helm of a crusade against illegal gambling.

Cruz, 73, is due to turn 75 next years to go before he submits the customary letter of resignation on his 75th birthday" he said of the 70-year old Cruz. "And even then, Nonie does not have to accept the resignation."

Asked about the appointment, Cruz on Sunday said he had been requesting for an auxiliary bishop. Still a prelate named primarily to help bishops dispose their duties, both administrative and apostolic, in their respective dioceses.

Lawyer files graft raps vs Gonzalez over Nani

LAWYER FRANCISCO CHAVEZ yesterday filed charges of "graft and grave misconduct" before the Ombudsman's office against Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez whose "dereliction of duty" allegedly delayed the prosecution of former Justice Secretary Hernando "Nani" Perez.

Chavez, in his complaint, said that Gonzalez violated the law when he allegedly refused to act on a request from the Ombudsman's office to secure witnesses from the Hong Kong authorities in the criminal investigation of Perez.

According to records submitted by Chavez, the Ombudsman's office was investigating Perez and several other individuals for alleged money-laundering activities.

The Ombudsman's office was acting on allegations by former Manila congressman Mark Jimenez that he gave Perez $2 million in bribe money in 2000 in exchange for his not being included in the criminal charges against deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The money found its way to the Credit Bank in Hong Kong and from there, the said led to several bank accounts in Switzerland, the records showed.

In November 2001, the Ombudsman's office reportedly asked the justice secretary to seek the help of the Hong Kong counterpart to obtain the pertinent bank records from the Credit Bank in Hong Kong.

Gonzalez was the sole "central authority" designated for the task under the Agreement for Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between the Philippines and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, according to Chavez.

Chavez alleged that Gonzalez deliberately sat on the request and had even asked his subordinates, chief state counsel Ricardo Paras III, to put the request on hold.

"I hope not that he is doing things like preparing drafts for the takeover of businesses but correct prosecute Perez. That is selective justice," he said.

Palace sees no fight with Mark Jimenez

By Christine D. Avendaño

WHO'S AFRAID OF MARK Jimenez?

Certainly not Malacañang, says Executive Secretary Ochoa Ermita, who has some friendly homecoming advice for the businessman-politician and critic of the Arroyo administration.

"Just relax. What's he excited. He should just relax," Ermita said of Jimenez, who returns home next month after an absence of nearly three years, including 27 months doing time in a US federal prison.

The US government is set to deport Jimenez — aka Mario Crespo — on Nov. 21 after he finishes serving his sentence in a facility in Pennsylvania, a Bilibid court had sentenced him on charges of tax evasion and election campaign in November 2001. Those same crimes he had been convicted of committing while living in the United States years ago.

While Jimenez, an economic adviser to former President Joseph Estrada who was later elected to the House of Representatives, initially fought off US requests for his extradition, he eventually agreed to be flown out of Manila in December 2001 to face trial in the United States.

Prior to his departure from Manila, Jimenez rocked the Arroyo administration with charges of corruption, and speculation is rife that on his return to the Philippines he will testify in the $2 million extortion case he had filed against former Justice Secretary Hernando "Nani" Perez.

Ermita said if he were Jimenez, he would "rebuild" his credibility rather than appear to be against the Arroyo administration. He said he may remain Jimenez would be advised by friends to do so.

"Ayaw naman siguro na sarmani ayaw na pakabasa siya hanggat sa pagiging controversial kapit siya. If he wants his would not want to come home in a fighting mood but he suddenly become controversial," Ermita said.

Ermita explained that for the prosecution of Perez to prosper, the pertinent banking transactions in Hong Kong have to be investigated and this would be possible only if Gonzalez acted on the request of the Ombudsman's office.

"The lackadaisical conduct of respondent could only profit former Justice Secretary Perez and his co-conspirators in the dissipation of the people's interest in deterring the government of evasion and criminality," he said.

Marlyn Galvez, Ombudsman's Public Assistance Bureau chief, said it would investigate Chavez's complaint.

The laws that Gonzalez was alleged to have violated were RA 3019, or the anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, RA 6713, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, and Section 5 of Article 208 and 208-A of the Revised Penal Code.

Lawyer Peter Jisgang, meanwhile, yesterday reproached Gonzalez for the latter's allegedly shabby treatment of reporters covering the justice beat.

Jisgang alleged that Gonzalez had summoned in a loud voice at his office's phone to ask the handcuffed reporters assigned to the Manila Times reporter Jomar Canlas who insisted from his office.

Canlas wrote an article recently about Charlie "Atong" Ang, Estrada's gambling buddy and his lawyer's disposition to alleged smuggle to cash Ang into a cross-witness against Estrada. Gonzalez was apparently irked by the article. Helen P. Flores

Rosales backs dispersal of rally led by 3 bishops

From page A1

on protest rallies in Manila, Rosales' parental jurisdiction.

But the archbishop had been making himself aware since the announcement and implementation of the controversial policy.

'Pressure'

Rosales said the raging political crisis generally manifested in the protest rallies was a result of the lack of vision by the government and its people.

"Leadership without vision a treasure—the betraying my God and the people I serve," he said, adding:

"Filipinos do not know where they are going. They just move from one crisis to another, from one rally to another."

Rosales said the text of the Manila clergy act in the process of mapping out the course of the archdiocese.

The final vision statement will be presented during the two-day Manila Archdiocesan General Pastoral Assembly at La Salle-Greenhills conference.

"A church that has a vision knows where it is going," he said. "I just don't know about government. [They] may not be sure."

'Personal decision'

In defending the violent dispersal of the Oct. 14 procession, Rosales pointed himself directly opposite Bishops Antonio Tobias, Teopisto Alegre and Julio Labayen, who led it.

He said joining the procession was the bishops' "personal decision" based on their "conscientious and convictions."

In the first place, he said, it was "not right" for the procession participants to "unroll" toward Mendiola because when the rally permit supposedly allowed Chavit only up to the San Sebastian Church.

"When they were stranded, I think they were already beyond the parameters agreed upon," Rosales said.

That night, the procession participants reasoned that a separate protest commander had allowed them to march to Mendiola, where a fire truck and a phalanx of water-cannon were waiting to disperse them.

'Parental discipline'

Rosales likened the Arroyo administration's tough measures against rioters to a parent disciplining its child.

He said the child would naturally give a slap or two on the hand after violating the parent's rules.

But the water bombardment was no slap on the wrist for the procession participants, who have threatened to take their case to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Tobias had also said the EPR policy was just "spiking the ballot together."

"A little more of that and this thing will explode. This is the battle of the Holy Spirit and if you fight it, you can never win even if you are Malacañang," he had said.

Corrections

IN THE METRO section of the Oct. 10 issue, an item in Metro Briefs, "Mall breaks in"..., on Page A17 misstated the operator of a medical diagnostic center that was burglarized at Robinson's Galleria in Quezon City. The medical diagnostic center is run by Biomedic Inc., not Biomedics Inc.

* * *

IN THE Inquirer Showbiz Latest section of the Oct. 10 issue, a story—"Who's afraid of General Dalporto?"—on Page A17 misstated the name of one of the world's leading commercial airlines. The correct name of the commercial aerologist is Friedrich Engels—not Engel.

* * *

IN THE ACROSS the Nation section of the Oct. 10 issue, a news item—"Ordered not over for killing victims"—on Page A19 erroneously stated that Alberto Alcoran and Quedan Lim were still being held hostage by the Dentagon gang. The two kidnapping victims had been killed by the twist-tite gang.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Top Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Blanchard Street, Makati City, fax line, 897-47-02-94; e-mail address: topdesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complainants whose lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Letitia Rafael Reyes, readers advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph or fax line, 897-47-02-94; Atty. Beatrice Adversario, her phone number is 897-MAIL (6245).

SPORTS

E-mail: sr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Teddyboy S. Molavedra

2 insiders tagged in Benitez case

Archer's father claims duo helped secure his son's eligibility papers

By Mayang B. Castillo

A LIAISON OFFICER AND A FORMER MEMBER OF THE La Salle basketball squad's coaching staff helped Green Archer Mark Benitez secure his eligibility papers with the Department of Education.

The disclosure came from no less than the player's father himself, Mark Benitez, according to a very reliable Inquirer source who gained access to what transpired during the closed-door meeting of a four-man La Salle panel yesterday.

But the Inquirer is withholding the identity of the man surrounding the result of the La Salle inquiry.

The source added that one of the two team officials was present during the hearing, but who asked by Br. Bobby Castagil, FSC, the head of the office of Sports Development of De La Salle University, to leave the room before the start of the session.

La Salle came out with a statement late Tuesday night admitting that it indeed fielded ineligible players in its 2004 championship run.

The university has not disclosed the names of the culprits, but numerous published reports have identified them as Benitez and point guard Tim Garcilliano.

Garcilliano has also been summoned to air his side in the controversy.

Garcilliano, who ruled up for the Archers in 2003 along with Benitez, received his elementary citizenship.

In another development, Undersecretary Fe Hidalgo, the DepEd officer-in-charge, said they are not discounting the possibility that the fake documents were a result of an "inside job" perpetrated by National Educa-

TURN TO A2

3 more Fil-Ams join SEAG swim team

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THREE NEWLY DISCOVERED Fil-Americans, including a 17-year-old girl wonder who has surpassed at least three national records, will beef up the 28-man Philippine swimming squad's assault toward a Southeast Asian Games here.

Kiba Tolosa, a standout from the Delta School in Florida, has provided a lot of promise for the team, whose oldest member is 21-year-old Ma. Anna Dardia, a SEAG triple silver medalist.

Tolosa's credentials include a 200-meter freestyle mark of two minutes and 0.89 seconds, which is better than the SP record of 2:07 by Akiko Thomson. Her time of 1:06.61 in the 100 butterfly is better than Joy Ortiz's SP mark of 1:08.31 and her 400m individual medley record of 5:05.26 is faster than the SP record of 5:07.47 by Akiko Lin.

She's expected to stir things up for the relay drive along with Olympians Archie Peraglinon, Jil Walsh, Miguel Molina and Miguel Molfetas, who were handdown choices for the SEAG roster.

Tolosa teamed mates Jeff Pepple, who helped Molfetas prepare for the Vietnam SEAG where he captured the 1,500m free gold medal.

The other new Fil-Am recruits are Mikhail Reyes and Robert Walsh from the MAC Team in Virginia and Irene Stein Aguirre in California, respectively. They are likely to join the men's 200-meter relay squad.

The men's team is also made up of Olympians Timmy Chua, Roderick Ty, Lambert Gamba, Dean Goldsby, Benny Bordado, Ilgan Arabejo, Benjamin Ty, Jerome Jere, Jun Michael Otin, Rich Sims, Ferdinand Feijoloso and Richardmyer Sandi.

Mily Peraglinon and family at the helm, the women's squad is also composed of 13-year-old Dimple Gaston, Heidi Gatt Ong, Marchi Garchitorena, Lalen Dimaano, Chitkiel Legendop, Nikki Jennings and Hannah Uy.

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INNOVA

A Beautiful [R]evolution

TOYOTA

How family on P16,700 income can cope with VAT

From page A1

See if it's the children, then that's another matter," Ruiz said.

"Maybe it's time for us to look for jobs abroad."

Ruiz earns P10,600 and Maria P9,500 a month as teachers at the Quezon City Science High School. But their combined take-home pay of P16,700 is not enough to cover the household's monthly expenses of P21,160.

"Last month our youngest got sick and we had to bring her to the hospital. Our budget is so tight that when things like this happen, I don't have no choice but to borrow money," Ruiz said in an interview.

The couple have two daughters—Moira, 5, and Maya, 2.

Budget shortfall

With their budget short by almost P5,000, the San Diegos have resorted to cutting back on some expenses and have even defrauded on some monthly payments.

Their rent of P3,000 for a duplex unit owned by Ruiz's father is almost always a candidate for an EIC. They stop also recharging be able to save the P1,500 for health care.

"There's always the family and the teachers' cooperative to run to," Ruiz added, referring to the source of loan-savings.

The budget shortfall comes even as Ben, who handles the school paper's mail, has no extra.

He doesn't smoke, drink and usually rents his P50 to a six-month-old son.

Maybe it's time for us to look for jobs abroad.

Maria, who teaches English, also finds a spartan lifestyle. She doesn't shop for the latest fashion and her husband says she bought her last pair of shoes two years ago.

Relatives are asking Maria, who graduated cum laude from the Philippine Normal University in 1999, and had taught at private schools, to work in the United States or the Caribbean.

"Our children are still quite young for me to leave and work abroad," Maria said.

Doing the conservative projections of the Department of Finance, the research group Ibon Foundation Inc. said the San Diego household's monthly budget of P22,340 should increase by at least P961.50 to P22,301.50 to cover the higher prices.

Groceries

"Definitely, they will have to cut back on their snacking and groceries," said Ibon economist Jennifer Rosete Bella Umehara.

The San Diegos allowance P4,000 a month for their market needs and P2,500 for groceries.

BREAD EARNER: In no winner Rex San Diego, Quezon City Science High school adviser for its news organ, has no views, does not even have the MCO, and shops for clothes only once a year. Which helped the family make both ends meet—before the VAT. RAM ESTACIO

"[We set aside a bigger amount for the market because it's much better buying fresh food (than processed stuff)," Ben said.

Umehara said the San Diego family may have to cut their spending on food, too.

"There are many families like they. They'd savings on everything, the cheap food, (but with the more difficult times ahead), they may have to do so," Gorman said in an interview.

With the DOF's projected 6-percent increase in food prices, Ibon said the San Diegos' food costs would go up to P5,240 for meat market supplies and to P3,710 for groceries.

"Usually you eat lunch on that part of the budget (that is allocated the most money)," Gorman said.

Electricity

The couple spend P1,600 a month for public transportation and the same amount for lunch at the school canteen.

With the DOF's projected increase of 6 percent on public transportation and prepaid meals, the couple's budget for fares and lunch in the cafeteria would rise to a total of P3,032.

Despite having the fastest electrical appliances (a television, a refrigerator, two cooking fans, a rice cooker and a fan now), the P1,600 the San Diegos pay monthly for electricity will rise to P1,879 if they consume the same kilowatt hours, said Ibon.

"Their electricity consumption would be new to be reduced," Gorman said. "Small households no longer even exhaust, especially children's clothes. Others just use cookers instead of refrigerators. There are consumers coping mechanisms," she said.

While the couple have not received annual salary adjustments in the past few years, they can still be considered middle class, Gorman said.

Prepaid landline

"Spending for health insurance is definitely a middle income expense," she said. "(With rising prices), that will also eventually have to go," he added.

Gorman said that the San Diegos' telephone service might soon give way to a pre-paid landline.

"Also, if they have borrowings as a result of their already existing deficit, the family's monthly payments may also increase. They might also increase their borrowings as a result of the higher prices," she said.

Gorman said both Ruiz and Maria were candidates for "social mobility" who could want abroad or transfer to lower-paying jobs to private schools.

She said citizens of other countries could afford to pay outrageous taxes when they get up to 50 percent of those go back in the form of social services.

"The P1,500 a month [the San Diegos] pay for the pre-school is how much we longer be necessary because the government would take care of that," Gorman said. In estimating the social services in developed countries such those in the Philippines.

Gorman said Ruiz and Maria could consider moving to private schools because those usually offer discounts for their children's tuition.

Still, the couple are opting to stay in the public school. "We don't want people to say that it's all about saving for much as a public school," Ruiz said. "It was a choice and we made it," Maria said.

"This is where we think we are most needed," she said.

Senators to GMA: Collect, spend VAT revenues wisely

From page A1

to lay the ground for the implementation of an "efficient and more collection of taxes" as the government prepares to impose the VAT next month.

"It hurts de la Cruz is asked to carry an additional burden brought about by the new tax measure, the government should ensure that by being confident will be better managed," he said.

Sen. Jinkee Sarayan, who had vigorously opposed the VAT, voiced hopes that the government would prudently spend the estimated P1.06 billion to P1.20 billion revenue to be generated from the tax next year.

"Let's hope it would be spent wisely. The burden on the people will be managed if they see the benefits therefrom," he said.

Socially sensitive programs

Sen. Ralph Recto, principal author of the Senate version of the VAT bill, said the government would do well to spend the revenue collections on "socially sensitive programs" that provide the poor access to social services.

"Clearly, (if) burden those who consume more and the budget is the process of redistributing wealth," he said.

Recto, who along with 18 senators filed a bill that sought to exempt power from VAT, said that the tax law would dampen the consistency put chasing power and favor them to higher-paid jobs.

"It's like siphoning fuel out of a car while it's already on the road," he added.

Impact on prices 'minimal'

Malacañang officials assured the public that the tax would have a minimal impact on prices.

Trade and Industry Secretary Gregorio Tarriela said the VAT would lead to a temporary spurt of this administration in the plight of the poor."

Minority party-list Rep. Rita Gutierrez Bonoguet said her group would ask people to take to the streets if VAT "will be tantamount to suicide by hunger and despair or poverty for many Filipinos."

To provide immediate relief to taxpayers, Lakas Rep. Robert Ace Barbers of Surigao del Norte filed House Bill No. 4169 to condone the effects of the VAT.

The bill proposes to amend Section 35 (A) of the National Internal Revenue Code to double the allowance of personal exemption for individual taxpayers and to increase additional exemptions for dependents.

Living wage

The moderate Trade Union Congress of the Philippines said it would seek a new round of wage increase if the tax eroded the purchasing power of workers.

Trade Union Congress Alex Aguilar, however, said the greater impact of the EIC on consumer prices would still have to be considered.

While the Department of Finance foresees a "minimal effect" on prices, other groups think otherwise, Aguilar said.

"Increase of workers in the form of basic pay or cost-of-living allowance were last raised in the middle of the year. The minimum wage in Metro Manila remains the highest at P537 a day while that in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is the lowest at P180.

The minimum wage earners are below the family living wage. The National Wages and Productivity Commission placed the family living wage for a family of six in Metro Manila at P663 a day.

Partido ng Manggagawa Rep. Renato Magtubo said the EIC law was an instrument of multi-tiered taxation that violates equity.

Other groups warned that the government was inviting the people's wrath.

At a press conference in Quezon City Lahaw ng Mass, Freedom from Debt Coalition, Lumabas Ka and Alliance Makabansang Ekonomiya "warning signs" of this administration in the

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Swiss firm allows others . . .

From page B1

who approach us to manufacture Tamiflu, or collaborate with us in its manufacturing," said William Burns, head of Roche's drug division.

Just days after the Swiss-based group had signed an exclusive—but nonexclusive—deal with Gilead Sciences Inc. for the production of its drug, the government said that the virus could cause a human flu pandemic.

Pharmacies in Europe were also stripped of the drug following the emergence of the strain in migrating birds in Turkey and Romania that was found in Europe's first human victim (a boy) in Sweden—adding to the pressure on Roche.

The Swiss group has now received orders for hundreds of millions from 80 countries.

It has also donated enough Tamiflu to treat three million people to the World Health Organization and is trying to cope with additional demand from anxious private customers.

Roche was aiming to raise output eight to ten-fold over 2005 levels within 18 months to two years. The new H5 facility will be part of a network of 12 production centers.

A spokesperson for Roche told Agence France-Presse that the government of Taiwan had contacted the group to look at ways of increasing production of Tamiflu.

The Financial Times reported last week that the Indian pharmaceutical manufacturer Cipla planned to produce a generic version of Tamiflu.

"We will sell it to many countries where there are no patents," notably in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia, " Cipla's pharmaceuticals director Gabriel Otero newspaper.

The Swiss group said it was open to talks with Cipla, but had not been approached by the Indian drug maker.

Until now the Swiss company has refused to grant secondary licenses, saying that it prefer full or extensive control of production to ensure quality control.

Top priority

Roche on Sunday said that the top priority was to increase production capacity quickly.

Some stages of the production process are already subcontracted to partners. Roche has declined to give output data, in common with many other drug makers.

Roche has exclusive commercial rights for the basic drug ingredient Tamiflu from Gilead Sciences Inc. The compound reduces the impact of flu symptoms in humans.

Analysts expect Roche to publish a strong set of overall nine-month sales figures on Thursday with growth seen outpacing the overall markets thanks to strong performances of Tamiflu and cancer treatments.

Gilead receives royalty payments for the drug, which was registered earlier this year to cure about US$750 million in sales for 2005. AFP

ESPINOSA: At 10, can be still almost's heavy punches like those of Manny Pacquiao's?

Pacquiao agrees to spar with Espinosa

By Recah Trinidad

DESPITE INITIAL HYPERVENTILATING, MANNY PACQUIAO yesterday reconsidered and swallowed the ego for his turn to spar with 8-contact world champion Lauro Espinosa in preparation for the monumental rematch against Mexico's Erik Morales on January.

"Mukhang tama din ayos (he would be of help)," Pacquiao told international promoters manager Boy "Bobby" Nabat in Bacolod City where the two were guests yesterday.

Nabat had said he was invested Espinosa, who has been disallowed to fight by the California State Boxing Commission following medical issues, could not stand up to the expected burning during sparring with Pacquiao.

But when pressed by the reporter to get a life-script from Pacquiao, Nabat got an affirmative answer.

This reporter heard Pacquiao flatly agreeing to the process in a statement over Nabat's cellphone.

Pacquiao, who said he was willing to give Espinosa financial help, did not clarify how the proposed sparring would be carried out considering their discrepancy in age and power.

Pacquiao had himself been quoted as saying his phrase would get rudely hurt during sparring.

While Pacquiao suddenly getting the nod in the ring, the 168, 30-year-old Espinosa, the developments comes as another step for boxing expert Lennie Rivera.

Rivera, who also trained and developed Espinosa into a world champ, has been hunting for Espinosa to be part of Pacquiao's stable of sparmates.

Rivera sent the following text message prior to Pacquiao's decision yesterday: "It would do well for Manny to look back at the performances of his previous sparmates either for tuneup or the likes of Marquez and Morales, whereby his chosen ones acted the willing tools—like McTag Pacquiao outfit a cars has and as underscored done."

Told that majority is heard leaning on his side based for Espinosa after he was offered as a sparmate for the hard-hitting Pacquiao, Rivera made this assurance "I advise Manny to spar with Espinosa. Espinosa is one with the problems Pacman if Limbl (Espinosa) can't look it."

Rivera stressed that sparring is an entirely different set from actual ring combat. He added that Espinosa is basically of the same height as Morales and could also find Pacquiao exhibitory spirit.

Rivera also said Espinosa is superior for sparring sets he knew existed by other renowned partners than Espinosa must no longer be of full value to Team Pacquiao as a sparmate.

There are plans for Espinosa, nicknamed Limbl (Earthquake) for his sensational first round wins if Espinosa outweighs Gabe wins in Bangkok in 1999, to come home and grace the "Fight for Love" card for his benefit at the Ateneo Cole and Sports Arena on Oct. 29.

Aces dump Kings as Tee shines

By Jane Navarro

WITH TEE HIGLEY ON THE FLOOR, ANOTHER INJURY COULD FOR the Alaska Aces was simply out of the question.

McCloy was the glue that kept the Aces together as they routed the Hanes-guy Coolers, Kings, 130-72, in the San Big Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Despite nursing an injured foot, McCloy pumped in 21 points and grabbed 17 rebounds as the Aces romped both nightly after squandering a 29-point lead to an overtime defeat to Purefoods Chunkee.

"He's (McCloy's) nemesis," said Alaska coach Tim Cone. "The funny thing about Tee was he didn't practice the entire week and he just killed everybody on there."

McCloy aggravated an ailing right foot against this Kiamin which turned out to be a second-degree sprain. When McCloy left early in the fourth quarter, the Kings trimmed away at the deficit and reduced the Aces to the extension period.

The time, McCloy refused to abandon the Aces, who recovered from back-to-back losses for a 2-2 card.

"It doesn't matter if he's in pain. The guy plays hard all the time and that's what I like about him," said Cone, whose Aces topped the series wide open to the second frame, 31-32, after taking on McCloy's 21 points at halftime.

Tony Dela Cruz also had a superb night with 16 points and 10 rebounds while Jeffrey Cariaso and Brandon Cabby added 13 and 10 points apiece. Cone also praised Willy Wilson, who contributed the absence of playmaker Mike Cortes.

"Without Mike, Willy had done a tremendous job," said Cone. "Willy's underrated but he's a hard worker and he showed it tonight."

Cortes came in plenty before after suffering from MCL on his right knee which would make at least nine weeks to heal.

Sean Compley finished with 17 points and 13 rebounds but was practically a non-factor in the losers' ball.

CHARGE!!! Andy Seigle and Alaska's Sonny Thoss battle for the rebound.

Two insiders tagged in Benitez case

From page A1

BENITEZ

WW ladies stay ahead of S'woods

Tierro, Arcilla still on course for title clash

THRESHOLD: Johnny Arcilla yields only three games in Arvin Bael.

Run clubs back Subic Marathon

SPORTSWATCH

Valle downs Peña in RP 9-ball opener

Nasac Chairman's Golf Cup tourney set

NCA T-stag championship round today

Bakbakan elims get going at Big Dome

NET RETAIL? Philippine ITF junior champion Miguel Herrera (left) and semifinalist Michael Bacos with Manila Southwoods Tennis Academy head coach Anthony Taroc (standing) and Wilson Sports Inc. sales manager Jerry Tan. MEETA is on Herrera and Bacos to enjoy the finishing of Wilson.

Bunye eyed as GMA media czar

From page A1

plan to create the PCE and his appointment as its head, but he declined.

Early this week, Velarde said the President needed a spokesperson who had stature, was not combative, and could speak with clear authority from her.

He said he had given Ella Arroyo this advice in an effort to help her win public support against those seeking her ouster.

"One thing I have been telling the President repeatedly is that there are too many [voices] in the administration sending the wrong signals. I have advised her to look for a better spokesperson, and only one," said Velarde, who is also a spiritual adviser of Ms Arroyo.

Velarde said Bunye no longer had credibility and others still people wondering whether he was talking for himself or for his boss.

Besides, he said, Bunye had been on the job long enough to give way to "someone fresh."

"Secretary Bunye is a good man, but his flip-flopping on the issue of the 'Garci' tape has caused problems in the past when he speaks. Then the President knows that! Is that her sentiment?" Velarde said, adding:

"And another thing is, there is a better way of advancing a forceful argument in a calm way, not in a combative way."

Velarde was referring to Bunye's caustic statements on the "Hello, Garci" tape—the wiretapped conversations between Mr. Arroyo and a man believed to be then Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano—which he was the first to present to the public.

Guts

Bunye, who used to be unflappable under pressure, has lately been issuing strong words against protesters and critics of Ms Arroyo, banging chairs together and "dressing down."

Velarde said the spokesperson of the President should speak with authority.

"She needed someone fresh, with the guts to tell [her] what is right and wrong. At the same time, someone who has charisma, and whose advice you hear the people, the mere sight of your face will compel them to listen," said the man who has used his personal charisma to maintain an estimated following of five million.

"But now what I hear people say when they see his [Bunye's] face..." Velarde said, trailing off and shaking his head.

In Velarde's reckoning, it is just right for the President to be surrounded by consistent advisers.

"But at the end of the day, the President's words must minister's her decision that must prevail. And it cannot be that [his spokesperson] will say, 'That was just my personal opinion,' the President does not listen above it," Velarde said.

He added: "[The spokesperson has] to clear every pronouncement with the President."

Eduardo Ermita sallies

Velarde said confirming statements were contributing to Ms Arroyo's problems.

"Don't put the President in a delicate situation," he said. "Most of her problems now are not of her own making," he said.

Naming the Cabinet members, Velarde finds Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita "silent."

Ermita "does not involve [himself] enough, and [talks] without being an apologist," Velarde said.

But he took issue with Ermita's recent statement that elderly critics of Ms Arroyo, like former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, better stay home and not take part in protest rallies.

Velarde has denounced the violent dispersal of protests rallies in Manila, and called on the President to immediately withdraw the calibrated preemptive response policy used by police on demonstrators.

Failure

The President created the DCD just a few months after the May 2004 elections, with an eye to sound consolidating the government's disjointed propaganda machinery.

She has blamed her communications people for supposedly failing to convey to the public her economic progress and achievements. This supposed failure is believed to have resulted in her personality flawed approval ratings.

The DCD's first and only head, Silvestre Afable, quit the post in June after less than a year to office, reportedly because of his frustration over his inability to achieve the office's goal of being a seamless, professional and technology-driven communications group.

The DCD lacked a budget and was getting its funds from the Office of the Press Secretary. Afable was also unable to assert his will, supposedly because of the clash of egos in Malacañang and the fact that there were others with the same Cabinet rank as his.

Although the President put the DCD on top of the Office of the Press Secretary, the Philippine Information Agency, the Correspondence Office, the speech writers' group, the communications research group, and the government media group, Malacañang's communications group has remained fragmented—and Ms Arroyo's ratings are still at the bottom levels.

Doctor chance

The Palace insider said that with Bunye poised to broaden his sphere of influence in the communications group, the PCE had a better chance of following the goals of the defunct DCD as envisioned by the President.

But Bunye has been reviled for his alleged attempt to mislead the public in the "Hello, Garci" scandal, not for suppressing or patching the President's image.

SMASHING a pot full of freshly harvested bananas, President Arroyo opens the 26th Carnigan-Lanzones Festival Monday as the President are (left) Camiguin Gov Pedro Romualdo, Rep. Jurdin Jesus Romualdo and Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano. AUGUSTO CO

Hyatt 10 don't only get to Mendiola, cops escort them

From page A1

Bridge, popular by known as Mendiola, and on to Jose Reda Chapel before a prayer rally. They were flanked on either side by a line of police men linking hands.

Unlike on Friday, there was no incident during the march yesterday—the first allowed on Mendiola since Feb 24 to go unopposed by riot police or PNP-sponsored counterprotesters.

The Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association (Ippca) said oil firms had yet to fully reflect in their pump prices the significant surge in world prices in the past months.

By Nov 1, the price of regular gasoline should increase by P2.80 a liter, unleaded gasoline by P2.40 a liter and diesel by 95 centavos a liter due to the VAT, according to Ipcca spokesperson Chito Salud.

Despite the removal of excise taxes and the lowering of tariffs on fuel, gasoline prices would still go up by at least 65 centavos, diesel by 5.6 percent and liquefied petroleum gas by 7.9 percent.

Since the start of the year, gasoline prices have increased 25 times by a total of P10.85 a liter, while diesel had prices have gone up 29 times by a total of P9.30 a liter. Cooking gas prices have also risen 18 times by a total of P5.15 per kilogram.

Pressure intended gasoline users could at between P51.35 and P52.42 a liter, diesel at between P41.20 and P41.61 a liter, kerosene at between P52.00 and P54 a liter, and LPG at between P425 and P450 per 11-kilogram cylinder.

With the advent of the value-added tax in the western hemisphere, Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya said earlier that diesel and cooking gas prices should start inching up as those in the west usually used for heating.

DOUBLE WHAMMY
Oil firms raising prices due to VAT

By Abigail L. Ho

ON TOP OF THE EXPECTED HIKE, an added tax (VAT) on fuel, oil firms will have some net increases of P2.50 a liter for gasoline and P1 for diesel, which they will have to eventually pass on to consumers.

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Pressure intended gasoline users could at between P51.35 and P52.42 a liter, diesel at between P41.20 and P41.61 a liter, kerosene at between P52.00 and P54 a liter, and LPG at between P425 and P450 per 11-kilogram cylinder.

With the advent of the value-added tax in the western hemisphere, Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya said earlier that diesel and cooking gas prices should start inching up as those in the west usually used for heating.

To protect bodyguard, Jamby offers marriage

From page A1

room was cramped, but the cameras were there and so was a priest, Fr. Robert Reyes, who accompanied Madrigal.

Levi cite he accused of perpetrating to commit concubinage or adultery, Madrigal was in fact simply suggesting that she and Dimsdal protect a police officer assigned as the senator's body guard.

"If you are the father [of your child], then I'm the mother. Let's get married," she said, drawing laughter.

Accompanied by her lawyer, Madrigal had rushed to the Police Security and Protection Office, which Dimsdal heads, to complain that her bodyguard, PO2 Napoleon Hernando, had been harassed by the office.

Hernando's immediate superior is Dimsdal.

"All I ask from the chief superintendent is that they don't put him [Dimsdal's] name," Madrigal told Dimsdal.

"No, of course, ma'am, we don't do that," said Dimsdal.

"I trust those who work under me in family," said Madrigal.

"I understand ma'am. We know that. You know ma'am, as head of the family, I'm like their father here," Dimsdal said.

"Then," the senator cut the office short, "I'm the mother, so let's get married."

The exchange somehow eased the tension in the room.

Threatening messages

Madrigal said Dimsdal's office had been harassing Hernando by sending him text messages around midnight Tuesday telling him to report immediately to Camp Crame.

If the text messages had appeared threatening, it might have been the result of the overeagerness of the officers tasked to carry out his orders, said Dimsdal.

Madrigal said Dimsdal had summoned Hernando to give him a first-hand account of what had happened on Friday when the senator and other protesters were hosed down during a prayer rally near Mendiola.

Dimsdal seemed to find out if Hernando was the person seen on video who dropped a hand gun and then picked it up.

Madrigal said it was another security officer, Rey Natalio, assigned to her by the Senate, who was caught on camera. She said Natalio was duly authorized to carry the service firearm and to protect her any time.

Second video released

In security officer, Hernando has been entrusted with the duty of protecting the senator. Her safety is paramount, Dimsdal said. But he said that if he were in Hernando's place he would not have carried a gun to the rally, where the gun could easily be stolen.

Dimsdal also assured Madrigal that there was no order or plan to recall Hernando.

Also yesterday, police released another video of Friday's rally, this time showing a man wearing a green shirt, handing over an object to a man in white who appeared to have tucked the item in his waist. The man in white then resumed the protesters.

"It had my suspicions," said Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil.

The National Police chief spokesperson said an investigation was under way.

The release of the two videos was obviously meant to justify the police action on Friday.

"We're very concerned at what's happening in the midst of rallyists. We want to protect the protesters as well as our men. We don't like it to turn into a disaster later on," he said.

Asked about the possibility that the object being passed in the second video was hammer, Bataoil replied: "Well and good if it's not something that can harm them. That's also my hope—that it's not hang hazardous."

There is no peace of days, we must be conscious of these things," he said.

Palace adopts 'Big Brother' strategy at Mendiola

From page A1

"We hope that with this footage, the public will understand what happened last Friday was not just an action of the police but rather a provocative act of some leftists," Bersamin said.

Aside from sending a strong message to demonstrators that all their actions would be closely watched, Querol said that the video films would be used as basis in federal Malacañang's celebrated preemptive response (CPR) strategy.

Reconstructing events

"Our decision to use cameras several as well because we were able to reconstruct the events," Querol said.

Querol said that the police brought with them three cameras in last Friday's rally and he hinted that they might bring in more if the demonstration becomes big.

"We expect more rallies to come and the police are ready to enforce the law including the use of water cannon which has been effective in calming down situations," Querol said in a briefing.

There were rumors that authorities had a second video showing more incriminating evidence against the protestors but Querol refused to confirm this.

Malacañang is visibly gearing up for unscheduled protest actions in the coming days.

No-rally zone

The Presidential Security Group has stacked up the Mendiola gate leading to the Palace with several steel cargo containers while Palace to house-cabinet forces have been put on standby as heavy steel barricades strapped to the bed wire.

Manila City Hall is fencing up more to make Malacañang and its premises, including the Mendiola bridge, a no-rally zone similar to the one-kilometer ban imposed at the White House area in Washington D.C.

Ermita said authorities were treating the gate incident as a "very serious matter" that no apology would be enough to absolve the culprits.

Sorry not enough

"Saying I'm sorry will not be enough, they were caught on camera," said Ermita when asked if the Palace was willing to close over the incident.

Querol said the law does not require any exemption to the ban on carrying firearms in a rally.

"The police could have been blamed if his gun had fired where it fell and caused panic or bloodshed," said Querol who has ordered an investigation on the culpability of the persons involved in the incident.

Ermita supported the body guard to protect his boss, Madrigal, and say that he carried the gun without the knowledge of the senator.

Wanted: Another name for CPR

Also yesterday, National Police chief retire Lomibao said he was strongly considering using another name for the CPR to avoid confusion

Pinoy food for separated RP twins

VALHALLA, NEW YORK — SEPARATED BY DISTANCE, TWIN SISTERS CHERRY AND CHERISSE PAGUIRIGAN PREPARE TO MOVE INTO A NEW HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND HUSBANDS, THE FORMERLY CONJOINED TWINS, THE ONLY KITCHEN ACCESS IS TO WHAT THE FRIENDS ABOVE THEM.

"I can cook Filipino food," she said, "and we can sit and have breakfast and I can be in my pajamas and we don't have to worry about who's coming in."

Within a couple of weeks, the Aguirres will be hosting Rockefeller Children's Hospital, which has been their home away since they left the Philippines two years ago. During that time, the boys underwent extensive operations that climaxed in August 2006 with their separation at Montefiore Medical Center.

The 3-year-olds and their mother are moving into a three-bedroom house in suburban New York (but is moved from the village by Hawthorne, a nonprofit organization that provides housing and social services for low-income families).

Because Arlene Aguirre has no income, the rent is being waived by the village and furniture has been donated.

"I am grateful for all the gifts God and Cherisse and I have been given since we arrived here in the UK," Aguirre said at a news conference at Montefiore, as Cherisse played with the guitar and Cat Deeley to the family's second session. "The gift of a temporary place to call home is exciting because the boys and I are finally live like every other family in a home of our own."

She said she was "a little scared and nervous" to go out on her own without the 24-hour support she's had at Montefiore, but added, "I know I can handle it." AP

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozo

EU declares bird flu a 'global threat'

LUXEMBOURG—THE EUROPEAN UNION DEclared the spread of bird flu from Asia into Europe a "global threat" requiring international cooperation, saying western Europe was poorly prepared to deal with an influenza emergency.

Western European governments are scrambling to ban industrial quantities of flu vaccines and face hurdles to prevent citizens from possible infection.

EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou said on Tuesday that none of the 25 EU governments had sufficient stocks of antiviral drugs designed to lessen resistance to the common flu of such risk groups as the elderly, the young, diabetics and others.

He said the EU was working on a deal with the pharmaceutical industry whereby EU governments will "increase vaccination for seasonal flu ... and the ordinary influenza must learn to build up manufacturing capacity."

"We have not reached the level of (vaccination) preparedness that we should have," Kyprianou told reporters after updating EU foreign ministers at an informal meeting on the westward spreading of bird flu.

The EU was investigating a possible outbreak in Greece of the lethal H5N1 bird flu virus, which has killed 60 people in Asia. The H5N1 strain has been confirmed in Turkey and Romania.

Macedonian authorities said they will quarantine a small southern village, cull 10,000 chickens and send a sample from a dead chicken to Britain for bird flu testing following an outbreak of a highly contagious but common bird disease.

VETERINARIANS spray a disinfectant on a small poultry farm Dec. 13 in Cimanuca (site) off the eastern Greek island of Chios. AFP

Swiss pharmaceutical company Roche Holding AG, meanwhile, is building a new plant in the United States to boost production of its bird-flu antiviral drug amid fears about bird flu, and is ready to seek help from other companies to meet surging demand, the company said Tuesday.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said the EU has a duty to reassure public opinion.

"Members of the public are bound to be concerned," he said after chairing the emergency EU foreign ministers meeting, adding that "every effort must be made to show that there is a coordinated response to an outbreak."

The World Health Organization has said that although the arrival of the virus in a new location is worrying, "because most virus means more opportunities for genetic mutations ... it does not mean a human flu pandemic is drawn."

Isolated outbreaks that can easily be controlled pose a minor threat compared with prolonged outbreaks where birds continue to mix with people, as in Asia.

The EU health ministers, meeting Thursday and Friday, will discuss national flu preparedness programs, including the availability of anti-viral drugs. AP

Migration of deadliest form of avian flu is unstoppable, experts say

KUCUKMOTI, KAYSERI, DOB, TURKEY—More than 170 species of migratory birds annually visit Sultansazligi, or "Bird Paradise," Nature of Fish, a few kilometers away from the farming village of Kizilsen in western Turkey where the most deadly form of bird flu was discovered.

Here, birds who stops for as long as a month will travel long trips from Asia to Europe with millions of domestic chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys that are in close daily contact with humans—making the little bird specialists a nightmare for health officials attempting to contain the H5N1 bird flu threat.

Health officials say it is impossible to stop the spread of H5N1 via migratory birds, and are now trying to minimize its impact on domestic poultry and humans, a challenge that will become more difficult as the birds move south.

The migratory birds that are believed to have brought H5N1 to Turkey are now leaving and will fly across the Middle East and into Africa, a coming some of the world's least developed and least transparent countries, where outbreaks are likely to be poorly reported, poorly managed, and where close contact between humans and animals will dramatically increase the chances of a lethal mutation, experts believe.

Outbreaks in the Middle East and Africa could occur as early as November, and the threat is a constant one because the migratory patterns of different species of birds vary, and because the birds will fly back north toward Europe in the spring.

"The best situation is to avoid contact between poultry and wild animals, but it is not always possible, and it is more difficult in developing countries," said Jean-luc Angot of the World Organization for Animal Health. "We have nobody there very quickly."

Angot said he feels not only that H5N1 can devastate those developing countries, but that if the virus is not contained, migrating birds moving north in the spring will bring the virus with them to western Europe, and even more, than the longer H5N1 is in contact with humans, the greater the chances that it will mutate to a point to change.

Experts fear that the virus could mutate and infect more readily an animal disease could begin to pass easily among humans—setting off a pandemic that could possibly kill tens of millions worldwide. The disease is now difficult for humans to catch, but has been lethal for more than half of the 117 people who have caught it, and Samuel Jutzi, division head of animal production and health at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

In undeveloped regions where people live close to their poultry the chances of such a mutation are higher, Jutzi said, especially in areas where the bird flu migration coincides with a time when the human influenza virus or other parents. This increases the chances of a genetic hybrid being born—either inside an infected person or inside another animal such as a pig, which can serve as a so-called "mixing vessel."

Pigs and humans are the only species known to be capable of contracting both bird flu and human flu. If the two viruses get into the same cell, they could swap genes and create a dangerous hybrid that spreads easily among humans but keeps the lethality of the bird virus.

An expert's view believes the best way to control the disease is the wholesale destruction of poultry in affected areas, as was done earlier in Hong Kong and more recently in parts of Turkey and Romania where the virus was confirmed.

But experts worry that this will be extremely difficult in the African and Middle East countries now at the migratory path. AP

Category 5 Hurricane Wilma threatens Florida

MIAMI—HURRICANE Wilma intensified into an "extremely dangerous category five hurricane" early Wednesday, churning northward between western Cuba and Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, the US National Hurricane Center said.

Wilma, the record-equalling 21st storm of the Atlantic season, strengthened to the highest level on the Saffir/Simpson scale, the Miami-based center said in a bulletin at 0600 GMT.

"CAN EVERYBODY announce aircraft to clear that Hurricane Wilma has become an extremely dangerous category five hurricane," the senior said half an hour after it had announced the storm had strengthened to category four.

Winds at the center of the storm were clocked at 280 kph, the senior said, adding that the pressure, 894 millibars, was the lowest observed in 2005—and the lower the pressure, the stronger the storm. The hurricane was located 270 km south-southeast of Grand Cayman Island and 640 km southeast of Cozumel, Mexico, and moving slowly west-northwest toward Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, but was expected to turn toward the northeast within 24 hours. AFP

Asian quake toll hits over 79,000

MUZAFFARABAD, PAKISTAN—New casualty figures from the South Asian earthquake have pushed the death toll to more than 79,000, regional officials said Wednesday.

The new numbers come as rescuers using aftershocks jolted the devastated region, unleashing landslides and letting off another wave of panic among survivors who had loved ones and homes in the Oct. 8 disaster.

Asif Iqbal Soudraz, information minister for Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, said Wednesday that 37,958 people died in the province and at least 221,172 were injured, majority of them in Mansehra district. He said the figures were based on reports from local governments and hospital officials, and that the toll was likely to rise.

The prime minister of neighboring Pakistani-held Kashmir, Sikandar Hayat Khan, said at least 40,000 people died in that region. India has reported 1,360 deaths in the part of Kashmir that it controls.

The new toll by local officials is higher than the official count provided each day by the national government. That number was raised to 47,390 confirmed dead as of Wednesday with a warning that it would rise further. The central government count has lagged behind the local count since the early days of the disaster.

Wednesday morning's 5.6-magnitude aftershock struck 129 km north of Islamabad, near the epicenter of the main quake, according to the US National Earthquake Center in Colorado. It was followed by another in the same area almost 45 minutes later that registered 5.5.

The first aftershock caused a landslide in Balakot, one of the cities hardest hit by the initial quake. Debris covered the road to nearby Muzaffra, but it was quickly cleared, said Mehmood Attiq Lal. Saeed Iqbal, who is in charge of relief efforts in the area.

A landslide also blocked a road out of Bhandhani (the capital of Pakistani Kashmir), but it was expected to be cleared later in the day.

Iqbal said the aftershock was "very heavy" and that he saw dust rising from the Kaghan Valley north of Balakot, possibly indicating an additional landslide. He said he had no immediate reports from the 60 teams of soldiers that were carrying in relief goods to the region. AP

10,000 more children could die, Unicef warns

ISLAMABAD—THE UNITED Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) warned Wednesday that 10,000 more children could die from hunger, cold and disease in coming weeks because aid has still not reached parts of quake-hit Pakistan.

Unicef called for immediate steps to push through more supplies, saying that children would be the first victims in a possible "second wave of deaths" as winter approaches.

Up to 120,000 children remain unreached in mountain areas devastated by the Oct. 8 quake, "of whom the agency estimated some 10,000 could die of hunger, hypothermia and disease within the next few weeks," it said in a statement.

"The relief effort is becoming more complex with each passing day," the statement quoted Unicef executive director Ann Veneman as saying at the agency's global meeting in Copenhagen.

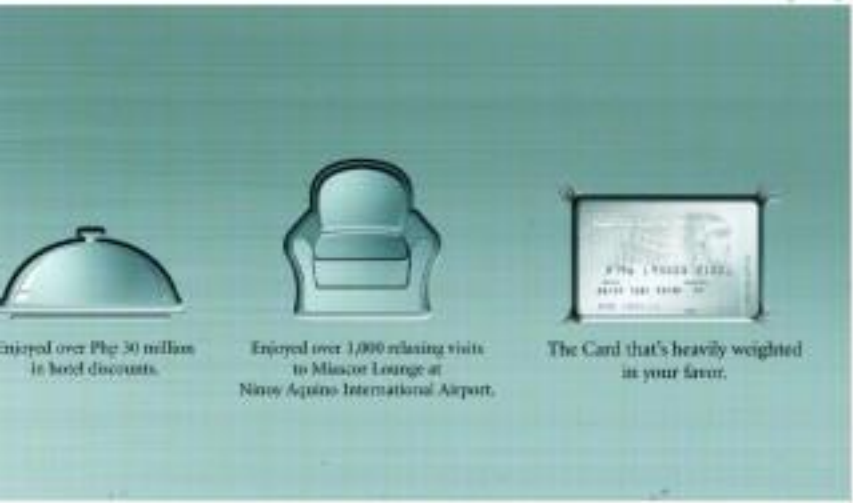
She said outbreaks of diarrhea had already been reported in stricken areas and there was a "significant threat of disease." Ministers says the quake killed at least 47,000 people and left 3.3 million homeless. Thousands of the dead were children, many of whom were crushed when their schools collapsed.

Unicef called for more helicopters to help reach survivors in isolated mountain areas, where access was difficult even before the quake which destroyed most roads and paths.

"There are still too few helicopters to reach more than 1,000 remote villages with life-saving supplies (for children) urgently need," Veneman said, adding that the agency also lacked humanitarian partners to make deliveries.

"Given the intermittent shutdowns of the air corridor because of bad weather, the consequences for sick and injured children could be grave," she said.

The Unicef chief added that temperatures were dropping and roads to stricken areas have become clogged with mud and people fleeing the mountains with their injured. AFP



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Russia takes 1st Brazilian to space

MOSCOW—BRAZILIAN President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on the first full day of a politically personal, breaking flat visit to Moscow Tuesday signed a 30 million dollar deal to send one of his compatriots into space on a joint Russian-Brazilian mission.

Unveiled at the Kremlin by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Lula applauded as the two countries' space agencies signed the contract which should see Brazilian cosmonaut Marcos Pontes take one of the three places on the Russian Soyuz spacecraft when it blasts off next year bound for the International Space Station (ISS).

"We plan to move to the creation of a 'technological alliance' with Brazil, in particular in the field of space," Putin said at the signing ceremony at the Kremlin.

"The signing of this contract to send in 2006 a Brazilian cosmonaut to the ISS is an important step in this direction," Putin said. AFP

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Sacrifice?

EDITORIAL

LAST JUNE 20, THREE DAYS AFTER SHE AVOIDED jail in the notorious election official scandal, a tearful stage in the election process, President Macapagal-Arroyo announced before a gathering of businessmen that First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo was going into self-imposed exile, as an act of "sacrifice...to remove himself from any situation which will cast doubt on my presidency." The President's husband, together with their son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, and Mr. Arroyo's brother, Negros Occidental Rep. Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, had been accused earlier of receiving millions of pesos in payoffs from *jueteng*.

As the First Gentleman prepared to leave, talk was rife that Mikey and Iggy were going to resign from the House of Representatives. Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, who also serves as one of Mr Arroyo's economic advisers, said, "They're my friends, but I think they have to go. We need to put some finality to this issue. Let's give in to the people. I know (he already achieved) to her mistake, she has to accept the penalty. There has to be penance and penance requires admission, repentance, restitution." It was obvious not only to Salceda that sacrifices had to be made if only to ease the pressure on the scandal-battered Arroyo presidency.

The following day, the First Gentleman left for Hong Kong in what everybody thought was the start of his exile. (Unlike his previous trips to the shopping haven, this trip had daughter Luli sending him off at the airport.) But four days later, he was back. He would leave again on July 6, this time for what looked like real exile in the United States.

The resignations of the two other Arroyos have yet to materialize, although Mikey was supposed to have joined his father in exile. The President's brother-in-law has ruled out resignation, saying, "I will not resign or go or leave. I cannot abandon my oath."

Mike Arroyo flew back to the Philippines on July 31 to pay his final respects to his half-sister, Rosario Tuason Montes-Llorca. He left again on Aug. 10 for another "brief visit" with it in the United States.

Mikey came home last month to attend the 31st birthday celebration of his brother Dodo on Sept. 4, and to allow his wife to celebrate her own birthday on Sept. 5 with close relatives. And yes, of course, before anyone forgets, to make sure his countrymen in Pampanga get the public service due them, although he is on official leave from Congress.

Mikey deserves credit for the very ingenious way he makes up for his absence—with his presence. Based on reports, Mikey went out of the country soon after her mother left for the UN Security Council meeting in New York. But he was back on Sept. 26 via Philippine Airlines flight PR 504 from Singapore. He has visited four Pampanga towns, according to a friend. He attended the anniversary celebration of the 355th Engineering Brigade in Basa Air Base last Oct. 14. And he was seen playing golf at the Baguio Country Club that night.

So what for was all that fanfare about the father and son's departure? On Tuesday night, Mikey was on TV protesting his new travels. Is the Pampanga congressman perhaps on leave from his exile?

Whether the son or the father is here or Dote elsewhere in the world hardly matters anymore. What is more important is that the charges that they received payoffs from illegal gambling lords are being lit to court. In the meantime, the President and her family should drop all talk about the sacrifice of living in exile that some members of their family are making. It only serves to confirm the popular suspicion that no one should take the word of the President or the members of her family, both real and official. Not after the President recanted on her vow not to run in the 2004 presidential elections and her half-hearted apology for talking with an election official. Not after Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye's prevarications of two "Hello Garci" tapes. Not after Environment Secretary Michael Defensor's tampered tapes. Not after Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong's stunned silence on the declaration of a state of emergency only to have it denied by Bunye. There is little coming out from Malacañang these days that people should take without a generous sprinkling of salt.

No other tribute

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Hernando

THREE ORCI ONE ACCOLADE PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo can give Gimmel Marcelo, who, due to illness, will resign as ombudsman at the end of November. That's to spare us another tribunal.

That suspicious tribunal ruled into old justice. The President did into one to overgeneralize Impeach, like fugitive Fiqqie Gordillano, to rescind constitutional offices.

Men of valor, vision and rock-hard integrity are the tiers of justice. That is especially true for ombudsmen, like the Philippines, where named "leaders" hands off to overlooked ones.

Empowered by political infighting, George Washington wrote: "You have the means to withstand the highest bidder." Simeon Marcelo had what it took. International and local observers agree on that.

Never public, like us, get a first close look of this 1973 law superstitcher during the Estrada impeachment trial. He awaken competent questioning of bank executives Clarissa Ocampo nailed them, Joe Valdez, Jr. et al. Joseph Estrada.

It is unfortunate and unfair, a stiff price to pay, to plunge what Marcelo got into the records from questions he asked. He pointed out crumbs Ocampo, Earl Scharsch of sort.

People liked what they saw there, a talented career architect guide. In Adlai Stevenson's words, he showed that is an ordinary change without feeling funny and in a hurry."

Thus, when President Arroyo appointed Marcelo as solicitor general in 2001, there were cheers. His solicitor bottom to not be President, a year later, to master him ombudsman—an office he's been groomed but dreaded into "my office, and ruler for seasons," according to a Stanzilius editorial.

Whichever of Marcelo's resignation [illegible], a collective groan erupted. It's typical of the man that he quit without explaining. Whatever others learned of his health came indirectly.

"I feel pain all over my body," a pair Marcelo told his senior colleagues behind closed doors, the Inquirer reported. Not a reality where doubt has surged into every crevice, resulting in grotesque to-do's all. "I'm physically acclimated city enforced," video quoted him as saying.

Dominic's career moved was presided at the April 1996 Commission on Appointments hearings. But Congress looked the other way.

"It has to what's allowed for the rest of his career-at-war term, Ombudsman Incorrie will be devoting a considerable amount of his official time protecting his hide," constitutional scholar Joaquin Bernas, S.J. predicted then.

"His image is shattered . . . and it is impossible life for him to function effectively," the Ateneo professor said. "How the country can go around him plays out will say a lot about the future of corruption."

Who President Arroyo picks to replace the 63-year-old Marcelo will say a lot about the future of democracy for information.

The 1987 Constitution adopted the broadest section (succession of a public interest-defined) in. Peoples' expectations of it are high. They feel, rightly, that an ombudsman's life and work must radiate that indefinable power which a King Bhumibol of Thailand, for example, [illegible] and moral authority.

They also ask: How could a Joseph Estrada appoint incompetents like Aurelio dela Llana, cronies to the Commission on Elections? Did Erap's military uniform bind President Arroyo?

Such probably never know the answers. We must live with the sad reality that Ombudsperson says vague: "Every sergeant has stars-and-bars ideal relatives."

The exalted and Bar Council is there to help sift out seamy characters, before appointment papers reach the President's desk. Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr. and his colleagues have suggestions that, before some ombudsman of the stifling from the Supreme Court, says the BIR is review-ing candidates.

Fun ain't freak this office's constitutional architecture. Deflagis, we may spectate screaming protestors on Mendiola. But in streets, the final decision rests with the President.

An old Hebrew proverb says, "The heart of man and the laziness of the sea are unfathomable." We shall see come Nov. 30.

E-mail: juan_hernando@pacific.net.ph

Then and now

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE "AT 53, AMONG FRIENDS TO TMB, even the presidency should sometimes. President Joseph Estrada got in to the demands that he leave his office. Nobody here wants Makati should resign, she said. As soon as possible. She could weigh now, all the better," like to pass that President Estrada should leave. Malacañang sooner to save the failing economy. "Things are so bad now." (Abstracted, December 2000.)

Now: "Once again, we're achieving the rule of law... Let it not resign," (July 2003), replying to calls for her resignation.)

Then: "As the other day urged President Estrada to resign, The President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo stepped up her attacks against the President. She said the lacking scandal founding the President deserved that to promise not to let his relatives and friends benefit from the government was just empty words." (PDI, 10/27/00)

Now: Barring his pastor worse under 1986." (Archbishop Oscar Cruz told The Senate committee hearings on jueteng.) "What kind of government is this? Are we in a military state already? There are no more principles. There are no more values and morals. Everything is just about money, money, money." (Archbishop Oscar Cruz, where his subordinate began exorcising.)

Then: "Lynch-ing by example, transparency is good for the public, isn't it, Ging Deles? (Heh-heh.)." And we said of the land of government—the morals to lead. "We need to inspire more if much both in the government and Philippines' society." (Anonymously, December 2000.)

Now: "Hello, hello, hello-ferry, hi-yell! I still lead by more than 1 million!" (Exchange between GMA and Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, which became a popular "ringtone.") All heads of departments of the executive branch of government shall resign the consent of the President prior to appearing before either house of Congress. (This includes generals and flag officers of the AFP. (TMD-PDI 464.)

Then: "After-the-prayers and reflection... the Archdiocese of Manila officially supports the calls for President Joseph Estrada to resign... This call on not just is not a violation of the constitution but

principle of separation of Church and State. It is a living inside because of the moral dimension constitutes the political issues.

"The local Church is partaken in the prophetic role of Jesus Christ, her Founder, declare that our main reason for denouncing the bad news presented by the Estrada presidency and attendant scandals is our deep-felt [illegible] of the social moral values our people hold in high esteem. (Archbishop Fernando Capalla, November 2000.)

Now: "In the spirit of humility and truth, we declare our peaceful but determined collective decision that we do not demand her (GMA's) resignation." (Archbishop Capalla, after GMA indicated to "talking to a Counter official" during the campaign's votes.)

Then: "I support the call to protest and action heard by Mr. Emmanuel Jesus Garilao. The Church leaders and living times require protest and various forms and of us. The common sense of confidence that hears our country is severe. Upon the call to participate in the Mass for the Nation at Malate Church Plaza on Dec. 7 so that we can unite in prayer and in action for a peaceful and decisive resolution of this crisis. I also support Cardinal President Gloy-Aquino's call for the people to stand vigil to be beside parliament to hasten a vote on nation." (CBCP, December 2000)

Now: "They are behind this." (GMA, referring to the marchers the PNP water-cannoned and Friday the said they had a "different agenda" from prayer in mind.) "They had it coming." (Spouse Barry, referring to the same marchers.)

Then: "The indispensability of the people's freedom of speech and of assembly to democracy is now well-evident. The reasons are well put by Emerson: first, freedom of expression is essential as a means of securing individual fulfillment; second, it is an essential process for advancing knowledge and discovering truth; third, it is essential to participation by the people in decision-making by all members of society; and fourth, it is a method of achieving a more adaptable and hence, a more stable community of maintaining the precarious balance between healthy change and necessary continuity.

"It would be hard to overstate these arguments, all deficits that when the sovereign people assemble to petition the redress of grievances, all should listen. For it, a democracy. It is the people who count. Those who are dead to their grievances are orphans." (The Supreme Court ruling on basic on the case of Joseph Estrada vs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, upholding Calderon's re-arrested Rep.)

Now: "No permit, no rally." (Calibrated Preemptive Response.)

Then: "Her President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo warned President Estrada against declaring a state of emergency to quell growing opposition to his administration. Arroyo said the country is busy in the coming days meeting with various cause-oriented, religious and political groups to discuss an alternative agenda." (Philippine Star, Oct. 24, 2000.)

Now: "It's way off the mark. I don't think it should be even be even considered at all." Upon on Europe, on earnest. GMA will declare martial law. In December 2002, let's not rule would and not again.)

Then: "I recognize that making rash calls to [illegible] Official's was a topic to judgment. I am sorry." (GMA apology speech)

Now: "We break the law, we have to account for it. This applies to everyone, the rich and the poor, the powerless and the powerful. Ignacio Bunye, on the water-cannoning of the protesters.)

Then: "Ah-don't" (Election slogan of Marcos camp against President Diosdado Macapagal, 1965).

Now: "Ah-don't" (Rejection slogan of some people against Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, 2003.)

Bishops were not at Mendiola

THERE'S A LOT OF DISINFORMATION AND misinformation going around. Last Friday's protest action near Mendiola going around. In this day and time when it was held, some media still refer to it as a "rosary rally led by three military bishops," which was disgraced by the people.

What are the facts? One, the incident at Mendiola Bridge was no longer the prayer rally that was held earlier at Quezon's Peace Monument by the people. Two, it was actually ended at the Salvation Church. The Mendiola incident was a political protest action.

Two, except for Fr. Robert Reyes who joined the politicians and militants, there were no bishops at Mendiola. Three, militants were imported to Mendiola. They had gone home after the procession moved up at San Sebastian, so they couldn't have been for the mass rosary.

* * *

If there was public outrage over last Friday's dispersal, it stemmed mainly from perception that the police indiscriminately fired water cannons against peaceful protesters and religious leaders said, however, is that there was hard no effort by the bishops to dispel the notion that they were harassed at Mendiola. Bishops acted always like they were in control. Four, it must be reminded that it's a sin to tell a lie. Their silence on this score would be considered as a lie since they seemingly or unwittingly continue to encourage the perception that they were the leaders of the ill-fated protest at Mendiola. That's not fair at all.

* * *

Several glaring facts can be gathered from yesterday's rally: police officials, when footage of last Friday's incident was replayed, said that police only fired water cannons in response to rock throwing. Only a few the Hyatt-Mendiola rally which was led by the bishops, had a permit and that others were taken to make it look like a protest rally, with the militants observing "silence in prayer, clasped rosary" as Arroyo described the group's leaders asked for permission to proceed with a procession of religious statues to San Sebastian Church, which the police denied. Instead, they were led to the Manila City Hall's entrance, but the procession never proceeded. At the end, former Cardinal Sin announced that the rally was finished and people started going home. The bishops' group led by Archbishop Oscar Cruz and Cardinal Sin's successor Gaudencio Rosales, who left the scene of the violence, were not at Mendiola. They were in their cars.

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Terror tactics of Marcos dictatorship

ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE OCT. 11 issue of the Inquirer was the picture of another dispersal of protesters marching to mend Mendiola. This after Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes awaited members of the House that they will not use a "hammer to kill a fly."

He believes that the latest dispersal is the result of the "calibrated preemptive response" policy of the Arroyo regime. This we believe is an anchored on any legal or moral reasoning.

We must remind the Arroyo regime and its police and military forces of Article 18, Section 4 of the Constitution. "No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble and petition the Government for redress of grievances."

Even BP 880 prohibits the use of arms or cannons. Section 9.C of the law states that, "arms gun, missile grenades, smoke cannons, or any similar unit—for device shall not be used unless the public assembly is attended by actual violence or serious threat of violence, or deliberate destruction of property."

According to the news report, the rally was dispersed even before it could form and march. If there was any "clear and present danger," it obviously came from the police.

Section 12 of BP 880 states that "when the public assembly is held without a permit where a permit is required, the said public assembly may be peacefully dispersed.

It is said, "Know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Our country can only be free if it seeks the truth. The government knows the cause of the problem, but its officials are not controlled in obliterating them. When an awful truth? We have it given.

—LEE ANTONIO,
ajlcantoni@columbus.net.au

By an [illegible] of the illegal nation in [illegible] the aim of [illegible] a peaceful mode of dispersal of public assembly.

Clearly, the Arroyo regime and its armed forces are suppressing the people's right to assemble and air their grievances. This is no different from the worst tactics and methods of the Marcos dictatorship.

—EC ARRIETA,
deputy director for operations,
Task Force Detainees of the Philippines-Luzon,
tfdp_staff_members@yahoogroups.com

President's decision to replace Santos good for insurance industry

SEAL G. CRUZ WAS APPARENTLY MISinformed about the record of Benjamin Santos as insurance commissioner, or he would not have defended him so strongly in his column.

Santos' proposal to "reform" the third party liability insurance system for private car owners by organizing a "consortium" of insurers is nothing new. It was tried during the Marcos regime and was found to be a system which bred corruption and victimized the insured of their policy payments. But this time, the consortium that Santos wanted to establish would have been a cartel which would have been beholden to him had it been established.

The compulsory vehicle insurance system was established by Presidential Decree 1460 in June 1978. To handle the business, the decree organized the Philippine Motor Vehicle Liability Pool consisting of insurance companies licensed to do casualty insurance. However, the pool, managed by representatives of the insurance industry, was found later to have engaged in excessive frauds, in connivance with the government and the insured in hundreds of millions of pesos in unpaid claims and liabilities.

As a result, PD 1460 was amended by PD 1814 in January 1981, abolishing the fraud-ridden pool or consortium. The amended decree limited the compulsory insurance coverage only to third party liability to strengthen the coverage of government retainers to the Government Service Insurance System, and allowed all private insurance companies individually to issue Compulsory Third Party Liability (CTPL) policies for all other vehicles.

Santos' proposal would have revived the failed billion-peso CTPL fiasco and business to the same gas mate, where a few group of insurance companies would monopolize the CTPL business. This would lead to bigger corruption, apparently in connivance with top insurance commission officials who would have been beholden to him had it been established.

Many insiders in the insurance commission as well as bonds industries plaster that time some insurance officials would persistently transfer from such a move. As a former executive of the Philamlife group, Santos is believed to be in a position of conflict of interest as well.

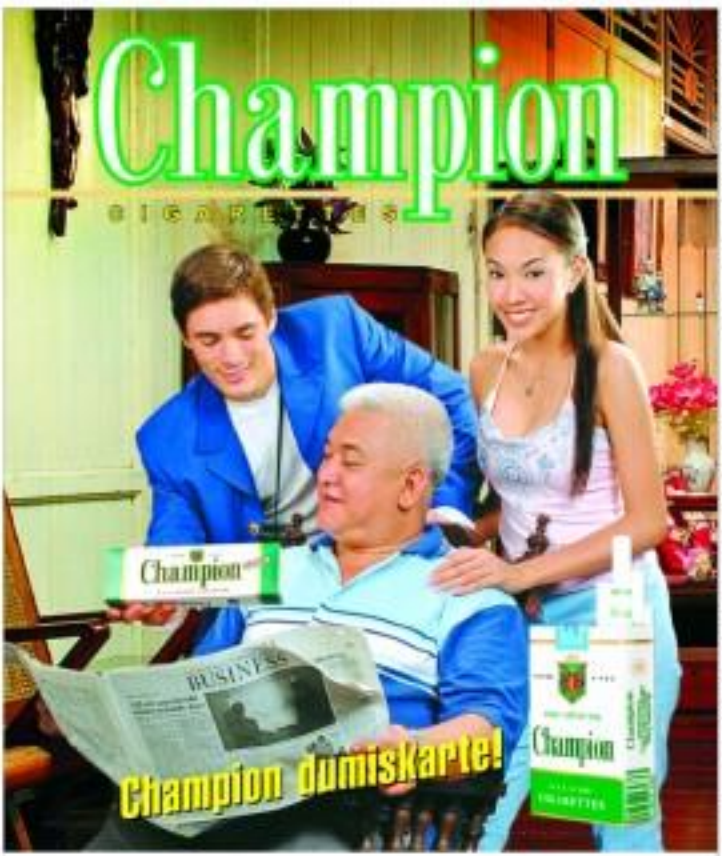
With incoming officials and employees of the insurance commission, as well as the public, dealing with the commissioner welcome President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision dismissing Santos. Besides, Santos is already 66 years old, past the retirement age for government executives.

—ANDRÉS BAUTISTA DE ANTONIO,
3393 Sonata drive 1,
Bayugán, Caloocan City

How to be one with cheaters and liars without trying a bit

I THANK CONRADO DE QUIROS FOR his wonderful analysis of the scandal-ridden government today. I suppose we have some of our kababayan living in the United States who go to great lengths to normalize cheating and lying because the track record is by now most case of moral, more problems.

Continuing classes in the government, especially when they occupy the highest offices of the land, is like accepting a bribe or paying one. By doing so, we become one of them. We need people who speak and exercise the truth, especially in the government. God to say they are a non-commodity these days in our system.



Government Warning:
Cigarette Smoking is Dangerous to Your Health.

Avoid intermediaries when dealing with SSS

THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO THE LETTER OF Bedie Tamara, which appeared in the Sept. 22 issue of the Inquirer.

Tamara complained about the demand in favor of SSS (Social Security System) guardianship benefit for her grandchildren as a result of the death of her daughter, Marlyn Fuentespina. Marlyn is the primary beneficiary of the benefit, Michael Fuentespina.

According to SSS Branch, they received the document to release the benefit on Aug. 16. The branch issued a special voucher for the release of the checks on Sept. 14. On Sept. 16, the SSS mailed out two checks: one for Crystal Fuentespina, the minor child of Marlyn and Vernon, amounting to P3,604.11 under check number 4003850C; and for Pacita, amounting to P17,832.06 under check number 4003850A.

We take this opportunity to remind our members and their beneficiaries to avoid intermediaries in making benefit claims. The SSS discourages the practice of dealing with third party representatives to process loans.

—ATTY. EVELYN C. ANG,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Views on 'Amerika' leftist propaganda

THE COMMENTARY OF LUIS TEODORO, which appeared in the issues last Sept. 30, was a typical leftist propaganda material, the kind you see taken in the company of his ilk. Teodoro focused on the negative aspects of everyday American life and blew them up 1,000 times so all people how bad the country was. What he forgot to mention while he was busy bashing the country was that his relatives were funneling US greenbacks to the Philippines to prop up its ailing economy.

Teodoro should be careful not to bite the hand that feeds him. Or he may end up watching his diatribe as a "movie" exclusively presented outside where the Philippines falls into chaos and communism. He was mad at America for mopping the carnage in Yugoslavia? Doesn't he read newspapers? Muslims were being slaughtered en masse before President Bill Clinton decided to intervene. Teodoro should look at the facts first before he fires off his word processor, lest he appears like a fool in front of millions of readers!

No, poverty exists in America, but not as rampant as he portrayed it. Not as rampant as in the Philippines!

—BERT LAUS,
berthaus@hotmail.com

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Bayan and Bituminous Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to fax. 897-4795, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

bagBox
Question of the Week
Your message to the 4 Filipino boxing champs: Brian Viloria, Rey " Boom Boom " Bautista, Bobby Pacquiao and Manny Pacquiao?
Send your answers to 2382 (Globe) or 385 (Smart)
Maximum of 160 characters
Start your message with bag, then your name/age/city/message.
Standard charges apply.
Send 2320 if commercial services are your concern.
Inquirer All Game reserves the right to edit messages.
Inquirer bagBox answers will be published in Tuesday's bagBox and each week at "Inquirer Short"

Across the NATION

₱100M allotted for ARMM infrastructure

COTABATO CITY—A MASSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE activity is expected in the few remaining months of the year with the release this week of nearly ₱100 million for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The amount, according to newly designated Public Works and Highways Regional Secretary Ingal Ali, is part of the ₱600 million "seed money" for the ARMM, apart from the expected normal revenue allotment provided to local government units.

ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan has reportedly been instructed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to monitor closely the fund disbursement in order to ensure its proper use in the implementation of various infrastructure projects.

Ali considered this year's seed money as "the biggest" since the creation of ARMM in 1989.

"Over ₱98 million worth of road projects are available," the new DPWH regional head said, adding that succeeding releases would be made only after the initial amount shall have been properly delivered as prescribed in the program of work.

He expects the construction boom to generate employment and improve the physical appearance of the region's four provinces: the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, a known haven of Moro insurgents and bandits.

Ampatuan was optimistic that implementation of the various public works projects would ultimately result into a peaceful and progressive region.

The seed money has been broken down for the following areas: Regional projects, ₱195 million; provincial projects, ₱195 million; and municipal projects assured through the 24 members of the Regional Legislative Assembly (RLA), ₱240 million.

Ali said each assemblyman has an appropriation of ₱10.0 million which will be used to fund specific projects approved by Congress.

But experience showed ARMM is a bad light in the use of infrastructure funds, as a number of projects ended up either "ghosts" or substandard in terms of technical in numerous engineering and construction standards.

Many projects had been implemented even if they were not the priority needs of the people, some of them destroyed by nature due to its inferior and substandard work.

"We hope these tragedies/errors of the past would not happen in the Ampatuan administration," said Fr. Bert Layson, chair of a non-government organization, Tulung Minda'nawan.

—Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

LAST RITES

These cadets are members of PMA Masigabi Class of 2009 who were formally inducted as members of the Corps of Cadets after surviving seven months of rebrual boot camp. But they had to undergo the final test. The traditional recognition rites requires them to rear back as far as they can during a ritualized send of acceptance, where upperclassmen require them to recite their senior cadets' names, ranks and even addresses. The more forgetful ones end up standing in this gruelling position for minutes, with senior cadets give them a tug on the shoulders, subtlety on their chests and a tug to signify their new role as privileged cadets of PMA.

Davao City to spend ₱20M for Asean forum

DAVAO CITY—THE CITY GOVernment of Davao is bracing for the high-anticipated Asean Tourism Forum (ATF) and has allocated at least ₱20 million, part of which would be spent to spruce up the city.

Councilor Bernhell Bosa, chair of the committee on tourism, said the allocation is just too little but relatively enough compared to the "goodies" and attention that the city would be getting from hosting the gathering of around 3,000 guests from member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in January next year.

"Imagine the attention that the city will get because of this. This is the best time for us to sell Davao City," she said.

Guests from Japan, the United States of America and some parts of Europe are also expected to come to the said event.

Tourism officials recently expressed their optimism about the readiness of the city to host the forum, despite the city's proximity to areas which are considered strife-torn and are constantly subjected to military operations.

Bosa said they have already sought the participation of all local officials and even the private sector for the cleaning up of the city like, however, said that the operation is not meant to hide the ugly face of Davao but to highlight instead the beautiful parts.

—Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

DENR asked to lift log ban for another 90 days

LUCENA CITY—THE QUEZON Provincial Multisectoral Forest Protection Council has appealed to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to suspend the log ban for another 90 days due to the high volume of uncollected logs in Sierra Madre, which, it said, threatens the safety of people living in low-lying areas.

During the council meeting in Real town last week, the group was flooded with reports on the presence of piles of logs along Agos River and creeks in the upper portion of the mountain.

"Based on the assessment of the council, the uncollected logs still pose a serious threat to the safety of low-lying areas, especially Infanta town. The DENR should give the people and the local government [less] time to address the situation," said Alexey Glorian, chair of the council's committee on information.

He said the council has adopted a resolution calling the attention of the DENR regional office to again temporarily lift the suspension on the log ban to purchase logs.

"The appeal is not only based on the obligation of the council but also in the spirit of the coming Christmas season," Glorian added.

He said tons of charcoals made from drifted logs were again lined up along the highway waiting for buyers.

"The proceeds from the charcoal could lift the spirit of poor calamity victims who are still facing the effects of the tragedy last year," he said.

On Aug. 2, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor issued a memorandum that allowed the removal and movement of logs and wood products in the provinces of Quezon and Aurora for 60 days as part of the government's disaster preparedness program. The period covered by the order ended on Oct. 2.

—Antonio Principe, DENR-CaL

director reported executive directors did not recommend the extension of the temporary suspension of the log ban, insisting that there were no more drifted logs to be gathered. —Bgen. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Militants to test CPR in Cebu rally vs GMA

CEBU CITY—MILITANT AND mass-oriented groups will converge at Fuente Osmeña Rotonda on Friday to call for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Christian Buenaseo, Cebu Coalition Against Hunger (CCAH) spokesperson, said it would also test how Cebu officials would respond to their protest action in the wake of the "calibrated preemptive response" rule imposed by the Arroyo administration.

But he said Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña had assured that the CPR would not be applied from despite an order from Malacañang for local governments units to get tough on "unruly mass actions."

Among those who were expected to join were members of workers and farmers' associations, drivers' group, youth and students sector and militant groups like Bayan and Gabriela.

Osmeña earlier said there was no need for him to get tough on protesters and impose a no permit no rally policy because the situation in Cebu was very different from that of Metro Manila.

Lito Singuco of the Lahus ng Mass and all anti-Arroyo groups would converge at Fuente Osmeña Rotonda at 3:30 p.m. on Friday to "pray for Divine intervention."

He said they would pray that the country would be freed from the current political, economic and social crisis and from the regime of "monkey, opportunists, liar and untruths, corruption . . . and abuse of power and authority."

Among those who would join were members of the militant farmers' and fisherfolk organization who wanted President Arroyo out of Malacañang for failing to protect them from harassment by landlords and from having their means of livelihood.

About 1,000 belonging to Kilusang mga Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Kamp) and Alyansa ng Kalusugan ng Bayan would first gather at the Fuente Osmeña Rotonda at 3:30 p.m. that day before marching to Colon Street in downtown Cebu City.

They would then proceed to Malacañang or Bagbo, the official residence if the President here located at the Sabang Piers.

After a short rally there, the group would go back to Fuente Osmeña Rotonda to join the other anti-Arroyo groups in the protest rally. —Aurora Papallasen, PDI Visayas Bureau

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Curangon's dead corals spawn life

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
Malinao, Albay

NINETY PERCENT OF THE MARINE REEFS IN at least 19 coastal areas of the Bicol region has been considerably destroyed, according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. But thanks to the department's community-based resource management program (CBRMP), the town of Malinao in Albay province is out in the search list of environmental concerns.

An underwater assessment conducted in 2000 by the Bicol Fishery Divers Foundation Inc. (BFDF) and the DENR Bicol office found that more than half of the 625-hectare Curangon shoal found in Malinao north of Lagonoy Gulf has reported coral cover. Still, they are not relenting.

The shoal found near Malinao's Quitaski Reefs that spills over to the Lagonoy Gulf in the eastern portion of Mt. Malinao, serves as the spawning and nursery ground for different endangered species of fish, corals and other marine organisms.

With finely-crushed dead corals for its bed, the shoal started to attract attention in 2003 but studies have not been to commercialize to prevent the use of cyanide and blast fishing in catching aquarium fishes and collecting corals.

The shoal is home to 39 species of live hard corals, 91 types of soft corals and 1,431 fishes belonging to 49 species and 20 families, according to Jose Bura, spokesperson of the BFDF and a member of the assessment team of the Technical Services Staff of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Bicol office. Bad three more were seen only in the 12 sampling stations that he team assessed.

Protection

To protect the shoal, concerned government agencies led by the DENR and private citizens established in 2003 a fish sanctuary and marine reserve covering 650 hectares of coral reefs.

Aside from the 450-hectare managed exchange the CBRMP, the shoal has 48 hectares of shoreline forest and 141 hectares of mangrove forest.

The DENR, local government unit and peoples' organizations in the five coastal villages within the bounds of the Curangon Shoal have joined hands in conserve its ecology.

Most residents living in Malinao rely on the resources in the coral reef. Fishermen tend to frequent the area to catch octopus, squid and reef fishes, but now they have more regard to the marine life.

To date, the DENR and the BFDF are closely monitoring the islands of Cagraray, Rapu-Rapu and San Miguel, and the towns of Sto. Domingo, Buenos and Bonbonan.

Benefits

The CBRMP has especially benefited the 150 coastal barangays of Malinao—Jenny, Bayhay, Bonte, Bakarit and Balite. The officials and residents manage the shoal, with assistance from the local government.

Enhancing natural resource management in Curangon's coral reefs has increased fish yield by more than 50 percent, with enough supply for the consumption of the shoal's biodiversity.

Lolito Nabeo, 42, a farmer and fisherman, said the establishment of the CBRMP has been helpful in supporting the families that depend on the shoal.

Bakrit is a barangay of the Ramsay Unit, which continuously monitors the place alongside the local government and BFDF technical team.

"Because of the increased fish yield, there are selected areas, that are parts of the Curangon Shoal where fishermen are allowed to fish."

Municipal agricultural technician Rosemarie said their extended information drive has reduced the gathering, harvesting, collecting and exporting of precious and endangered corals.

It has also stopped the rampant cyanide, blast, and compressor fishing, while the exploitation of endangered species like hawksbill, locally known as giant clams, has been controlled.

The growth of the coral reef shoal was also a deadly coral, precious responsible for causing tremendous damage to corals, has also been curbed.

More than these, the partnership of governments agencies, private sector and local folk has resulted in the establishment of bamboo plantations that help minimize the major riverbanks and the planting of more mangrove forests in Malinao.

The partnership has also resulted in the strict enforcement of the law, especially with the existence of the Barangay Tanod.

Community tourism

The local government of Malinao has also embarked on high-value crop productions, shore protection and weaving, aqua discipline production and full-scale farming as well as planting of agoho and talisay trees to make the community a possible ecotourist area.

Bill, Andy Salliot, a community organizer at Barangay Jenny, said support from the local government must be maintained to make the livelihood projects sustainable.

"The place, just like Mt. Malinao, is well-monitored and regulated. Yearly assessment is being done to know if the coral cover is still good or possibly reaching an excellent rating. We are now pointing both the original expansion of our mangrove forests," Malinao Mayor Emily Bas said.

Tourism regional director Monta Rotorillo said that owing to its distinct and diverse marine life, the Curangon Shoal is now on the map of the nation's best diving sites.

DAMSELFISHES (family Pomacentridae) busy hover around the diverse coral ecosystem.

VARIOUS species of Chromodoris, like this low-uncommon Chromodoris aureomarginata, thrive in the Curangon Shoal.

METRO
John Ezter G. Dipasupil

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Suspected fake cosmetic surgeons charged

By Margaux C. Ortiz

TWO WOMEN WHO HAD PERformed cosmetic surgery without a license on unsuspecting clients were arrested in Muntinlupa agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) last week.

The suspects were identified as Annie Apo of 2225 P. Tarosa, Sampaloc, Tondo, Manila, and Catalina Bravo-Garcia of 341 F. Tuazon, Project 4, Quezon City.

Another suspect, Emilia Santos of Sto. 666 P. Torres Bugallon St., Gagalangin, Tondo, Manila, remains at large.

Investigation conducted by the NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division (AHTRAD) headed by lawyer Romulo Asis showed that Asuncion misrepresented herself as a board nurse in a cosmetic surgery clinic.

With Apo as her assistant, Asuncion allegedly performed breast augmentation surgery on Julie Cruz but was not issued last June for P30,000.

Asuncion allegedly injected collagen into the client's left and right breasts during the two sessions conducted in Tondo and Quezon City.

After the surgery, the suspects asked Julie to recommend their services to other patients so she could get a "commission." A friend of Julie's then contacted the suspects and arranged to have her nose and buttocks augmented for ₱7,000 and ₱15,000, respectively.

In the last week of July, however, Julie started to feel unbearable pain in her breasts.

She later underwent two operations because of complications.

When Julie learned that her friend was scheduled for surgery, she called her up and advised her not to undergo the procedure, the NBI-AHTRAD report said.

When the suspects reset the surgery for Dec. 11, the NBI arranged an entrapment operation.

The bureau's operatives arrested Bayo and Garcia as they prepared for the surgery at the Mitra inn Hotel on Madison St., Manila.

Charges of violation of Republic Act 9173 or The Medical Act of 1959 and results were filed against the suspects in the Muntinlupa City Prosecutor's Office.

Playing possum saved him

By Yara V. Quintumdo

A 10-YEAR-OLD BOY FEARED dead to save himself during an alleged assault by four neighbors inside a passenger jeepney.

From his hospital bed, Ernesto Bahit, a Pantabangan City resident, told the police this story:

"Nagsalita-patapon lang po ako at nang malapit na po ang, ang sa-ako po ako humingi ng sakit-di ko [pretended] I was already dead and when the jeepney had left, I called for help," Bahit told police.

Jeepney drivers accused the identified victim on 25 Road in Barangay East Bembo, Makati City.

They later alerted the Makati Department of Public Safety (DPS), and Makati Police Department's (MPD) homicide section chief Senior Insp. Cary Reyes.

Makati Rescue sent an ambulance that rushed Bahit to Ospital ng Makati in Barangay Bembo.

"The suspects were allegedly hurting him (Bahit) so when he ... died the [suicide] phone from one of them," said PO1 Lovelie Grabosal, case investigator.

Invitation

Bahit said his neighbors Arnold Borrero, 32; Reynold Ambus, 28; Jonel Ambus, 18; Jerwin Ambus, 19; and his cousin, Arsenal Maltasuna, 20, invited him to a drinking session in Borrero's house at dawn yesterday.

Later, they went for a ride in Borrero's passenger jeepney [plate number TVM 761].

Inside the jeepney, Bahit alleged the men suddenly began threatening him, forcing him to admit to having stolen Borrero's mobile phone last month.

Bahit denied the accusation, but the men still beat him, and then dumped him by the roadside. The Muntinlupa City police later arrested Borrero, Ambus, and Mark Anthony.

Arsenal remains at large.

Bahit positively identified the three suspects who were charged with frustrated murder.

LEAP OF FAITH
A member of the Manila police SWAT team goes through a fitness test, part of a self-improvement program for men and women in the force. RICHARD GUTIERREZ

Makati eyes economic zone status

By Rommel W. Dominguez

MAKATI OFFICIALS ARE PUSHING for an economic zone status for the city in an effort to make it as attractive to business as Singapore.

"We would need legislation," said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, adding that this could mean changes in the city charter or the inclusion of Makati in the list of the country's economies.

Binay was interviewed in the sidelines of the inauguration yesterday of Shell Inc.'s accreditation and training facility at the BCBC Plaza.

The mayor said the code would list out tax perks for companies engaged in information and communication technology and business process outsourcing, particularly those which locate facilities and retirement centers.

Further, he said the local government would be reviewing the city's land use program, especially the rules covering no area along Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue where buildings are allowed to rise up to four stories.

"To address the shortage of office spaces, the City Council may adjust the floor area ratio in the land use scheme such that buildings could go as high as six or eight levels," Binay said.

A statement from City Hall explained that the proposed investment code provides for priority investment areas where businesses would be exempt from paying local business and real property taxes for three to four years.

The city government is also eyeing a 1.95 percent exemption for the first year of operation of a business.

Cable TV thieves face jail term in Quezon City

By DJ Yap

THINKING OF TAPPING YOUR neighbor's cable television line?

Be warned. If you are in Quezon City, that could mean five months in jail.

Quezon City has approved a tougher measure against illegal cable TV or Internet connections, following complaints from service providers that they were losing millions from the illegal tapping of telecommunication lines.

Authored by City Council member Pilipinas Shell leader Ariel Inton Jr., the "Anti-CATV and Cable Internet Pilferage Ordinance of Quezon City" imposes stiffer fines and penalties for cable TV thieves.

First time offenders shall be fined ₱5,000 and/or jailed for a maximum of 30 days.

Second-time offenders shall be fined ₱15,000 and/or jailed for a maximum of three months, according to the ordinance.

A subsequent offense means a fine of ₱25,000 and/or imprisonment for a maximum of five months.

If the offense is committed by a corporation, partnership or other juridical entities, the chief executive officer, president, general manager, or officer-in-charge shall be held liable.

If the offender is a foreigner, he/she shall immediately be deported after serving out his sentence.

In a statement, Inton said the local government should protect CATV and Internet providers as part of Quezon City's effort to strengthen local industries.

He said the measure would lead to a favorable business climate for the cable TV and Internet sector, which could only be advantageous to the city as good business means increased tax revenues.

Lessons learned from past rallies

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN rights (CHR) says that video footage of last Friday's water dispersal of a prayer rally shows that agitators and provocateurs were present among the ranks of the rallyists.

The agitators were on the fourth line and pushing those in front.

The front line was composed of, among other people, former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, Sen. Jamby Madrigal, and Rep. Loren Legarda.

While they pushed and shoved those in the front row, the agitators were heard shouting, "Sige, sugod na, sugod na! Tiyuna, break through, break through!"

The ambush police sprinkled and that was when the trouble started.

The CHR Behind-rioters-wielding observers claiming the prayer rally.

This indication that the CHR foresaw trouble because some of the participants were bent on going to the San Beda College chapel located in a "no-rally zone."

If the CHR foresaw trouble, why didn't the Manila Police District (MPD) also anticipate trouble?

In fact, while a group of rally participants, led by Gutierrez et al., was on its way to San Beda College, CHR Commissioner Wilfredo "Boboy" Stankiewicz was learning the lines with Innocent Gim. An

Loreilhan, Philippine National Police chief.

Soriano was on top of the situation as he was receiving reports from CHR Robbers.

The CHR commissioner urged the PNP to station the prayer rally participants to go on celebrity-ed as they only numbered less than 500 and were, therefore, "containable."

Loreilhan said he would pass the request to Director Vidal Dusoul, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), who would then pass it on to Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong, MPD chief.

It was, therefore, Bulaong's fault.

If Bulaong were at the rally site, things would have turned out differently.

He should have taken a lesson from retired brig. Gen. Santos Cabrera, Manila Police chief during the last days of President Marcos.

Cabrera personally led his men in confronting anti-Marcos demonstrators who were led by well-known opposition figures at the time.

Nursing Cabrera held dialogues with demonstrators.

The result was that no trouble erupted when Cabrera was present at the rally-site.

I would like to apologize to Gen. Cabrera for making the mistake of saying in the last column he was relieved as NPD-chief in the aftermath of the Manilenia massacre during President Cory Aquino's term. Cabrera was no longer NPD chief when the massacre took place).

The police should never take sides in a dispute that is yet to be decided by the courts.

But police in Tubig, Zambales, led by Supt. Roger Aspa, did just that when they took sides in a family feud.

Aspa and his men arrested Caddie Star Funeral Homes, which is the subject of a dispute among members of the Pamugas family, and arrested its security guards.

They then turned the funeral parlor over to a group in the family, to the detriment of the other contending party.

Aspa did that without any court order.

He acted with one of the contending parties for reasons only he knows.

Aspa should be punished for that.

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Metro Briefs

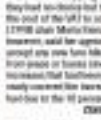
Coffee plant closed

CEBU — More than 600 workers from coffee giant Nestlé, the Pasig City government had ordered the closure of a coffee plant run by the Universal Robina Corp. in Barangay Tisa in this city. The Nestlé-Universal Robina complained of dizziness and difficulty in breathing, while others complained of asthma attacks because of prolonged exposure to the steam from the factory," said city environment and safety operations officer Abel Raquel Balcolegas. After the plant was told to wear face-mounted respirators last month, the company made an effort to control the odor, but tests conducted at vulnerable levels. Balcolegas said the measure order would be lifted only when the stench is consistently reduced to "acceptable" levels. The coffee-maker, which employs about 300 employees, manufactures the instant brand Santa and Bayan ni. *Edson C. Tandoc, sl*

P50 cab flag down!

PUBLIC transport groups are considering a one-month of fare increases over fuel prices up to ₱50. "I with the implementation of the rules ordered by [DOT]. A taxi group is planning to ask the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) for ₱50 more in the flag down on top of the existing ₱3 minimum. From the current ₱40 flag down. This would bring the new rate to ₱90. Some passenger groups said they may press for a ₱1.50 hike in minimum fare. Without specifying how much they said they would also automatically ask for the 10 percent VAT on fare. I. Philippine Airlines, Air Philippines Gen. Cebu Air Pacific associations to raise fare said they would start adding a 10 percent VAT on the price of tickets for domestic trips by Nov. 1. Officials of shipping lines said they had no choice but to pass on the cost of the VAT to consumers. LTFRB chair Maria Elena Bautista, however, said her agency would not accept any new fare hike petition from seats or buses since the fare increases that had been granted already covered the increased cost of fuel due to the 40 percent VAT. *Evelyn F. Rabe*

Goodbye to dumps



ILIGAN — Homes owned by Valenzuela City residents in Metro Manila became a decisive factor in the election of Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile as the city's mayor, according to Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian. The mayor made the announcement during a recommended recognition of the city's Waste Management Office and Task Force Disiplina for their success in clearing the city's areas in dumps. "It is the basis if Ingat dumps cleared by the NPDC and the Task Force since their creation in April," Gatchalian said. According to the mayor, another clearing operation will be conducted on Sunday in San Miguel, Mariona as part of their continuing program to rid the city of illegal dumps. *Nancy C. Carvajal*

Mikola set to join last 2 AF3 legs

KEDAH FORMULA THREE SERIES LEADER Mercedes Mikola is foregoing the Australian leg of the A1 Grand Prix on his vaunted race to the last two rounds and secure the AF3 title at the Batangas Racing Circuit on Nov. 5-6.

Filipino Tycoon Ey buttressed the Indon's bid to clinch the AF3 overall title outright by scoring a breakthrough golden double at the famed International Circuit last month in Indonesia.

Ey zoomed up to second overall and gained a shot at the crown many thought was already in the bag for Mikola after just eight legs.

"Mr. Mikola is coming," said AF3 Corp. chief Ed Pelea. "He said he wants to win the AF3 title. This will make the race for the overall crown more interesting. Three Indons has the race down this close."

Mikola leads the race with 127 points, 26 points ahead of Ey, lead driver of Speedtech Asia. Britain James Winslow of Zhell Helix Kinetix PC-SO trails by his Jam 2 points, with last year's runner-up, John O'Hara of Ireland, also driving for Zhell Helix, a far fourth with 79 points, followed by Indo Pelu of Team Goddard Mitsuoh Team Asia with 75 and defending champion Christian Zonnio of Australia who has 72 points.

Ey who earned 116 only this month, is hoping to duplicate his golden double in Sentul and Winslow and Mikola's relatives rooting for Indon lives if by success in his camera, however, this is no guarantee he would bag the overall crown.

With a win worth 20 points, all Mikola has to do to clinch the crown is rule Race 11. A runner-up finish in both races, worth a combined 26 points, or a second and third place finishes, will do it for the Indon ace.

"It's still worth a try," said Ey noting that he needs to win both races and hope that Mikola does not finish higher than fourth in both. "Who knows what will happen during the actual race? I'm hoping for the best."

Ey added he will also watch out for Winslow, who can also steal the crown.

Aside from Amanda, I also have to keep an eye on James. He is just a point behind. Anything can still happen."

After that setback in Sentul, Mikola, of Petron Racing with Turnbull, announced he would not race in Australia. Australian leg of the A1 Grand Prix that coincides with Rounds 11 and 12 of the AF3.

But he changed his mind knowing that a victory in the series would further boost his stock.

While the race for the driver's title is still wide open, Shell Helix Kinetix PCSO, managed by 2003 AF3 champion Popoi Marcos, has clinched the team crown after piling up 198 points.

Houston Astros try again

ST. LOUIS—ALBERT PUJOLS EQUIPPED his mammoth game-deciding homer's effect on the Houston crowd in a soundpromise pounding the second baseman.

Whether it's no. 50, championship series-turning moment, only time will tell.

And as Pujols said several times Tuesday, the day before Game 6, the St. Louis Cardinals still trail the series 3-2 and face two more must-win games to make it to the World Series for the second straight season.

"It's the best hit of my career," Pujols said. "But it's what you do tomorrow. I don't look at the past. I don't even want to talk anymore about it."

It's also one of the most dramatic homers in recent Cardinals history, perhaps eclipsing Chuck Tanner's dramatic shot off Tom Niedenfuer in the 1985 playoffs against the Dodgers. Tanner's homer came in a tie game and Pujols' came with a 3-0 win means down to tie final out.

The Cardinals hope came to expect such matchmaker from Pujols, a trial of error from his first days in the major leagues five seasons ago; he was fifth in the order in the pivotal sixth inning of a game St. Louis need to win to avoid the series back home, and teammates were dying the truth.

David Eckstein counted the two-out rally when his scrambled out a single against reliever closer Brad Lidge, then Jim Edmonds walked. Pujols did the rest.

"Eckstein got a big hit...Jimmy got a big walk and then you Albert the money they pay him to do what he did," Cardinals reliever Troy Percival said.

Pujols is among the leading MVP candidates this year after finishing second in batting (.3306) while hitting 41 homers and driving in 117 runs and leading the majors with 120 runs. It's typical production from the first player in major league history to hit 30 homers in his first five seasons. The third-youngest player to reach 200 homers, the fourth player to begin his career with his straight 100-RBI seasons.

"He's obviously the best I've ever played with," Game 6 starter Mark Mulder said. "I was with [Jason] Giambi the year he won the MVP but what Albert's done day-in and day-out is just so impressive."

Entering Game 6, Pujols is batting .447 the last nine postseasons against the Astros, with six homers and 15 RBIs. AP

CATCHER Yadier Molina (left), Albert Pujols and the rest of the St. Louis Cardinals are looking for one more miracle. AP/PHOTO

Alvarez karts away Cadet crown

THE GOAL THAT JOHN ALVAREZ HAS set for himself has just about been there to three years ahead.

"Hopefully I'll be karter of the Year like Marco [Caddell]," said Alvarez.

And he's already off to a familiar start from the 12-year-old racing prodigy will attack that goal one turn in his kart into the season he claim.

Boxed off from the main pack, Alvarez found himself trailing he behind. And with still 17 points cushioning him from his closest pursuer, he could have easily just eased up.

Instead, he made the finish line his goal for that race and started chasing his karts redemption.

By the 11th lap he passed the home time with 54.300. Going into the last lap, he was side by side with the leaders, Roman Academia and Jazz Bendaz, the pro-racing hero in the overall standings.

At the end of the race, Alvarez had done enough to claim the Driver of the Year in the Cadet 98 Super Class of the 2008 Shell Superkarting Series. Alvarez finished with a total of 334 points, beating Bendaz to Academia for the crown.

It was not an easy route to the title.

AFTER ruling the cadet class, John Alvarez has his sights set on higher goals.

Alvarez, backed by Permanent Insurance, Prestige Cars BMW Carried and Bridgestone, finished second in the kickoff race, 16 that dominated the Asian Karting Championship and the drained Bingchen legs. He also had a solid Cebu leg, where he zoomed to the top of the standings with a 17-point lead over Bendaz going into the final race.

"The conditions [and roll out]," said Alvarez, who skipped a friend Asian racing season to focus on his training.

"His exceptional racing skills and love for the sport are undeniable," said Ronnie Cua, who always watches him son race along with husband Jim.

Pinoy booters in China for SEAG training

THE PHILIPPINE FOOTBALL TEAM LEFT FOR Guangzou, China, last Friday as part of its preparations for next month's Southeast Asian Games.

Competing the men are Ian Sumsta, Ely Bernardo, Chipoy Caligdong, Aron Casdoron, Arnold Cantos, Michael Casas, Roy Chavez, Oliver Cobra, Jhervic Italia, Noey Joagan, Jeffrey Lamboy, Dennis Mallari, Jay Ryan Mamaril, Vaughn Mcclincher, Rolly Narvaza, Jose Lothair Quebec, Donald Ouvalle, Jerome Ovealle, Aron Pedroche, Andy Pinchoso, Paul Valentino, Alex Valverez, Russell Yapac, Dennis Yemarie, Mark Villon and Michael Fuertez.

They were accompanied by head coach Aris Caslib, Nicanor Jarlos, Mitch Salcueza, John Tarcena, Vic Balendag and interpreter Roberto Tse.

The Philippine Sports Commission and the Philippine Football Federation are supporting the trip.

PFF president Johnny Romualdez said that the team is scheduled to play at least 10 tune-up games organized trough Chinese provincial and commercial teams.

Miriam rips CoL in WBL opening

DEFENDING ELIMINATION CHAMPION Miriam College opened its campaign in the Mike BEST Women's Basketball League (WBL) with a big bang Sunday by blasting Centennial College 82-40 in the PCAG, 44-28, at the San Beda College Manila gym in Mendiola.

Miriam dropped a 10-2 bomb behind the explosive plays of Alyssa Solomon, Thanee Bustamante and Kristine Yopico to take a commanding 16-10 lead in the third quarter.

Bustamante, Solomon and Yopico finished with 14, 12 and 10 points, respectively.

CoL made up for the setback by posting its second straight win in the high school level at the expense of PWU-JASMO, 42-31.

Nicole Tesoro led CoL with 14 points.

Ping launches G5 Series at WW today

PING, THE STUDY BRAND DARLED FOR THE colored iron sets to only back iron, launches the G5 Series today, making the first time in the company's 46-year history that products in all categories are introduced all at once under one name.

Local retailers and invited guests have been treated to the two-in-one event at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club where the latest Ping clubs, including drivers, fairway woods, hybrids, irons and putters, will be unveiled.

Kicking off the day-long G5 launch is the product seminar for selected dealers after a luncheon at the Wack Wack ballroom. This will be followed by cocktails and demo session at the driving range in the evening.

Two expert clinic of Ping are in town to attend the affair and introduce the users duties to local merchants and golfers in the entire new Ping clubs and CEO John Solheim are explained to the media in a press conference last August.

They are Steven Hsu, the duties regional head, and Colin Field, Ping manager for Asia. They are coming from big product launches in Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand.

BEST weekend clinics on

THE BASKETBALL EFFICIENCY Scientific Training (BEST) Center, the pioneer in basketball clinics for kids, resumes with its Saturday classes on this weekend in four venues.

Founded by former national coach Nic Jorge and sponsored by Mike, the BEST Center is now reaching out to 1656 year and has to its roster of graduates many of the stars who at Philippine basketball, including the likes of Jerry Codiñera, Benjie Paras and Jun Limpot.

This Saturday Feb. 223, the clinics will be at the Ateneo College Covered Courts in Rockjustice, at the Notre Dame of Greater Manila and at the Mapua Institute of Technology in Intramuros. Registration is ongoing either at the venues or through 451-0450, 372-3068 or cebu 372-3065 or email bestsp@pacific.net.ph.

STAMP OF HEROES: PINOY Stamps Inc. launches its personalized stamps project for the Southeast Asian Games recently. Former Laguna vice governor and Congressman Rodolfo "Teroy" Tingcun (third from left), the father of RP Tae Baseball, Alvarez POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco (second, left) were chief champion of the project, to be produced in coordination with the Philippine Postal Corp. With them are (from left) Tingcun's daughter Rudylyn Tingcun-Manalang, president Pinoy Stamps Inc.; Tess Fregnan, VP and COO of ISONmediasystem Inc., and Sports Commissioner Richo Garcia. The project will help maintain postal services as well as help boost SEAG funds.

RACING CHIEFS: Race winners Jay Al Buenaflores and Edwin Dionisios of Our Lady of Fatima University, third placers Jeoff Allen Guillen and Franciscus Gregorio of University of Santo Tomas, and runners-up Conrad Catapusa and Renen Pacienza of Centro Escolar with organizers of the Grupenguate 2008 Culinary Adventure Race sponsored by Fresh California Grapes. Nineteen teams, all students from culinary schools in Metro Manila, vied in the three-hour race including mall climbing, rappelling, swimming, compass reading and running to reach the finish line at Greenbelt 5 in Makati. PR consultant Ros Gonzales, Fresh California Grapes' RP representative Evelyn Mercurio, Fuser magazine editor Noemi Calabroso, race director Ign Borja and US Agricultural Trade Office director Dennis Voboril.

Creating luck

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE FIRST ONE WAS A REAL HOOKER. But the second one?

A little, I believe.

Anyway, this changes lives.

Pyrotechnics had not entered by re-entry into these where it came from the game to score the most-talked-about victory this far in the PBA's 34 seasons.

That was the first one, registered on Friday last week.

It was like this:

Ryan Reyes' pointless dunes, Purefoods made an overtime win from Alaska.

If you won't consider that a clutches, days.

Two jumpers had sent the game to overtime. One was a pull-up from afar by Jayson Yap, the other a hit from nearby by Noy Castillo.

I was not that surprised because James Yap shoots triples with the ease of running pebbles into a manhole. Noy Castillo was clutch shots for breakfast.

But if you consider the previous modern moments that James Yap and Noy Castillo had re-entered with while delivering those fallen blows, that's the time you start to appreciate the uncanniness of their efforts.

Not so long, but labored? I can shoot those kinds of baskets myself. Ask Dayang. Not that was before, when the knees were fine at most, the wrist action was decisive as a bishopwood 45 pounds, the vision clear at 20-20.

But doing them with time almost expiring, the way James Yap and Noy Castillo did them?

All Yap need more than talent to sink them, more than skill to make the job done.

Luck. That's the one component that most often than not, comes into play when the going gets tough.

And yet, many aiming to have this tendency not to acknowledge this reason.

Everybody needs luck. You may not really be aware of it but, subconsciously, you create your own luck.

Phil Jackson created luck when he got Michael Jordan to lead the Chicago Bulls. Via NBA trade-arrest to that.

Phil Jackson created luck when he got Shaq O'Neal into the Los Angeles Lakers. Three NBA crowns attest to that.

Billy Tubigan created luck when he got Ilogo Ashwanden, Steve Co and Phillip Cezar aboard Crispa in 1975. Include Alex Gutdekers. Toss Philo Cornel Ebona in 1979 and 1980 (with Tommy Manotoc as coach...Ed)...still a record up to now—at least to-date.

Right after Purefoods beat Alaska on Friday last week, a rash of text messages came my way. One text message read: "Who could be Ryan's lucky charm?"

Ryan here is Ryan Gregorio, the assistant coach of Purefoods.

"I have no idea who his lucky charm is but, for sure, he either keep it to my self mom," I texted the texter back. "But in a sense, Ryan created his luck when he fielded in Boy Castillo in the dying seconds of the game."

Castillo looks sure the game to overtime.

In the five-minute extension, Ryan Gregorio's Chamber Gimm labored in producing four points. But that was enough to win it for Purefoods as Tim Cone's Aces were limited to just two points.

Two nights later, Purefoods was at it again. It forced another overtime, this time against San Miguel Beer, before snatching another two-point victory.

"What a weekend," said Ryan Gregorio.

The weekend gave him a 2-1 card and the lead in the San Mig Coffee PBA Conference. But more importantly, it gave Ryan Gregorio his bonus stars in years.

If his luck holds, the opposition had better start believing that luck just does not happen.

It happens because one creates a reason so make it happen—the way Ryan Gregorio seems to be doing it.

It can't get any better than that.

* * *

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2006
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
B

BUSINESS

Ailyn Rose G. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Carrie S. Nartatez

Export growth targets cut anew

Trade deficit seen rising to $8.3 billion this year

By Dave C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT again scaled down its export growth targets for 2006 and 2007 due to slowing global demand for electronics and rising production costs.

As a result, the country's trade deficit is expected to balloon to $8.3 billion this year and $9.7 billion next year.

The latest official forecasts, which the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas would present to the fiscal agency Development Budget Coordination Council, indicated a lower export growth forecast of 6 percent for this year and 8 percent next year.

It was the second time this year that the government lowered its export growth outlook. The DBCC had originally set a two-year export target of 13 percent. It first slashed the target for 2006 to 8 percent.

The export growth projection was likewise trimmed to 9 percent for the year and next year from the previous forecasts of 11 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

The more bearish outlook for exports, based on an emerging retreat in driven up by the BSP as of October, factored in the slowing demand for electronics, which accounted for 60 percent of total export receipts this year.

Based on the scenario, the country is expected to earn only $40.9 billion from exports this year and $45.1 billion next year to replace the projected import bills of $49.2 billion and $54.8 billion.

The expected trade deficits of $8.3 billion and $9.7 billion... are expected to account for 3.6 percent and 3.8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)—would

HOW TO GET TO THE TOP OF THE HEAP
Jim Davis of SAS, the world's largest privately held software outfit with about 11,000 employees in more than 400 offices around the globe, talks about how his firm helped Fortune 500 companies develop and drive their organizations forward during the 4th PMAP International CEO Conference held yesterday at the Makati Shangri-la.

New IC chief says she's ready to take on pre-need firms

By Michelle V. Remo

NEWLY INSTALLED INSURANCE Commissioner Evangeline C. Escudero yesterday said the commission was prepared and willing to become the regulator of pre-need firms.

Escudero's perceived hard line to foment reform on the pre-need sector has industry executives squirming over the fate of their firms.

She agreed with statements that the insurance and pre-need businesses are not much different. The regulation of pre-need firms was therefore a role the Insurance Commission was prepared to take on, she said in an interview during a Senate hearing on the national budget.

"The pre-need business is not the end to the insurance industry," Escudero said. "It's a idea not foreign to myself, considering that I had been involved with the [insurance and Exchange Commission] before, providing technical support."

The new insurance commissioner served as a consultant for the SEC in 1998 when she was still president of the Actuarial Society of the Philippines. She said that when she was a consultant, she did reviews of financial statements, pricing and reserve valuation reports of pre-need companies.

However, Escudero said that the Insurance Commission simply would let Congress decide on whether to transfer the regulation of the pre-need industry from the SEC to the IC, and would not meddle in the congressional deliberations.

"But we are prepared if ever there's an ... we said.

Once the pre-need industry is placed under the regulation of the Insurance Commission, Escudero said the agency would begin to work on increasing capital support to enhance its technological capacity.

The Philippine Federation of Pre-Need Companies earlier issued a statement opposing the appointment of Escudero as head of the commission, even while the proposal of transferring supervision of the pre-need industry to the Insurance Commission is still being deliberated in Congress.

WHAT'S INSIDE
PLDT sets P54-B investment
Gov't scouts for new job markets abroad

PLDT sets P54-B investment

BIR drops case versus GMA-7

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE has dropped a 14-year old tax deficiency case against GMA Network Inc., formerly Republic Broadcasting System Inc., for lack of merit.

In 1991, the BIR billed then Republic Broadcasting P51.74 million for unpaid franchise taxes in the third and fourth quarters of 1987 and for the entire 1991.

Republic Broadcasting filed an administrative case, contending that it was not liable for franchise taxes for the years cited by the internal revenue agency as it had no franchise during the period cited by the BIR.

The broadcast firm changed its name to GMA Network Inc. in 1996.

Now the most profitable television outfit, GMA plans to sell part of its shares to the public next year. Clarissa L. Batino

By Clarissa L. Batino

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Co. has earmarked a P54-billion capital investment from 2006 to 2009 to maintain its leadership in the wireless business and expand into growth areas, such as high-speed Internet for the masses.

PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno said in a speech yesterday before the Management Association of the Philippines that PLDT would spark a "broadband revolution" that would make high-speed Internet access "a basic communications service all over the country."

A broadband revolution, said Nazareno, would reinvent PLDT's business and essentially replicate what text messaging had done to the mobile phone.

The high-speed data transmission would give rise to new Internet products and create business opportunities, similar to what the short-term transfer of mobile phone credits had spawned among small entrepreneurs.

"This will open up numerous opportunities for dramatic improvements in education, business and employment," Nazareno said.

Apart from broadband, Nazareno said PLDT would engage in fixed-wireless convergence, which would provide cheap calls through the Internet.

"PLDT will come and we won't just stand by and watch it steal our business," he said. "We will embrace it but we will make sure that we phase in our assets into PLDT without sacrificing the huge legacy network that we have." He said that in three years, the company would have spent P268 million to P300 million to install the broadband infrastructure needed to transmit bigger chunks of data at a faster speed.

The cost is part of the 354-billion capital investment that the company would undertake over the medium term.

"We are spending P27 to P28 billion for capital expenditures in the next three years starting 2006," he said.

Nazareno added that the company was on the way to meeting its P29-billion profit target this year, and would announce "record-breaking" third quarter earnings next month.

The company is expected to report more than P4 billion in earnings for the third quarter.

Once deep in debt, PLDT is putting its obligations ahead of schedule.

Nazareno said the company's "cash generating capability" would be major driver behind increasing profits and declining obligations.

Business and cultural survival -2

ONE OF THOSE I AM MOST IMPRESSED about is making the many interesting sites of Mindanao.

Last month, I was invited by Mayor Lito Montilla of Tacurong City to the annual "Tinalak Festival."

Tahakalong is a Magindanaon term for "head covering." It sets and that their ancestors used to cover their heads to ward off the heat of the sun.

I am a "fashion" lover and I was amazed at the quality of "tinalak" served to us by our host, Mrs. Nenita Hau, one of the city's pioneering businesswomen.

Incidentally, livestock production (poultry, cattle, goats, native) is one of the fastest growing industries in the city today. It also has a breeding station for fighting cocks.

It is not unusual to find out that quite a number of businessmen from Manila, and even as far as Malaysia, have been to this city to explore business opportunities in the agricultural sector since it is the agro-industrial, commercial and education center of Sultan Kudarat and Central Cotabato.

The influx of migrants from Luzon and Visayas had transformed it into a melting pot of various ethnic groups of diverse cultures. Interestingly, the people are predominantly Hiligaynon or Ilonggo-speaking.

The city of Tacurong covers 15,240 hectares of plain agricultural land suited for all kinds of crops, such as rice, corn, sugar, coconut and African palm oil.

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bisa

The Southern Grains Complex, one of the largest in Asia, is found here and caters to the milling requirements of the farmers.

This city is also one of the most transparent and investor-friendly cities in the region.

Tinalak of Lake Sebu

I was greatly impressed with what I saw during the week-long exhibit of the "Inaugurasiyan and Lalahidayan" here in Manila. Women from different ethnic tribes were brought all the way from Mindanao to demonstrate the art of weaving.

One can see the amount of souls and labor put into the weaving of the famous "tinalak" and other Mindanao fabrics.

I went to Lake Sebu last week, right after the celebration of the "Tinalakdag" festival of Tacurong to see it happen.

There I met Mrs. Ita of the Indigenous Women Weavers Association Inc., who informed me of the many activities that the group was doing with the T'boli women to improve the quality of the "tinalak."

The "tinalak" is a fine and colorful fabric woven from "kinapot" or abaca.

The cloth has a lenient background, light, used by tot and beige designs.

Ita showed me a variety of beautiful "tinalak," from one meter and with a more intricate home and china.

The association discovered a technology that largely improved the quality of the tinalak, which used to be rough and coarse.

With this development, Ita hopes that the market for the woven fabric would increase.

The association is now focusing on educating the T'boli weavers for them to demand a higher pay for their work.

The association's vision is to professionalize the weaving industry and have their workshops in the downtown area of the town.

They look forward to the day when they can produce tinalak in commercial volume for sources to have sustainable income.

I would not be surprised if one day the tinalak's fabrics and designs would be used by the fashion houses in Europe and the USA.

There are many more tales about people of Mindanao and their noble desire to improve not only their own well-being, but of others as well.

Joji Ilagan Bisa is a practicing lawyer in Mindanao, vice chair of the Mindanao Commission of Women and National Core Board chair of the Mindanao PAFE Mindanao Rep, Export Development Council; chair, Joji Ilagan Foundation; former chair of the Mindanao Business Council. Email comments to jojibisa@yahoo.com

Shares ...

Turn to page B3

a chronic budget deficit, dealers said.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday ended its suspension of the expanded value-added tax, which the government needs to finance its ambitious spending program.

The Philippine Stock Exchange's composite index gained 6.96 points to 1,904.89 after trading between 1,942.46 and 1,885.44. Volume was 893.6 million shares worth 9937 million ($17.17 million).

The broader all-shares index advanced 4.66 points to 1,390.04.

Gainers beat losers 47 to 17 with 30 stocks unchanged. AFP

Export growth ...

Turn to page B3

represent a huge increase from the $6.4 billion (7.5 percent of GDP) recorded in 2004.

In scaling down the trade outlook, the government also took into account the surge in export growth arising from higher production costs which, in turn, was caused by soaring oil prices and investor woes, as well as a possible chance for higher wages.

Also, the country's import spending is seen to grow by 6 percent this year and next year due to higher oil prices, as well as purchases of capital goods and raw materials to support exports.

Despite the weaker trade position expected for this year and next year, the BSP expects the current account to remain in surplus, resulting in a balance of payments position surplus of at least $900 million for this year and next year.

The government also expects more investments to come in and fortify the export sector, as well as funds for infrastructure projects that will improve the shipment of locally-made goods to all domestic markets.

Last year, export earnings grew by 8.6 percent to $36.7 billion from a year ago, while import spending likewise expanded by 10.6 percent to $46.1 billion.

Based on latest government data, August exports rose by a meager 0.8 percent year on year to $3.404 billion, bringing the eight-month export earnings to $26.36 billion—0.3 percent higher than a year ago.

Earlier, the DBCC slashed the government's 2006 GDP growth target to a range of 5.7-6.1 percent on account of soaring oil prices. The inflation rate outlook was revised to 4-5 percent.

For this year, the DBCC pulled up the inflation rate target to an average of 7.9 percent from the original forecast of 5.4 percent.

The original GDP growth forecast for this year was maintained at 5.7 percent.

New IC chief ...

From page B1

The Industrialists and the objectivity and fairness of Bautista in dealing with the power industry was questionable, noted acting Chairman Antonio Nachura.

The group pointed out that Bautista was a consulting adviser of MERALCO Chairman Gerardo Ingco, Ingco's brother Lito Ingco, and Lito's wife with Sandra, which exposed insolvency and bankruptcy among privately owned firms.

The Industrialists said the MERALCO study, which was released sometime in the late 1990s, bore out the results of the reposition of the privatization policy.

Jollibee needs ₱1.7B to buy Red Ribbon

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FAST FOOD GIANT JOLLIBEE Foods Corp. may have to spend more than P1.7 billion to take over Red Ribbon Bakeshop Inc., a source said.

As of press time, the source said Jollibee was in the final stages of its examinations of Red Ribbon's financial books and would likely close the deal soon.

Jollibee bailed against to buy Red Ribbon, including its operations here and in the United States.

Red Ribbon executive vice president Jorge Concepcion yesterday told reporters that the company was expecting a 15 percent growth in sales in the current fiscal year ending June 2006.

Red Ribbon generated sales of P2.5 billion in fiscal year that ended June 30, 2005.

Concepcion said that of the amount, P1.6 billion was generated by Red Ribbon's roughly 130 outlets network in the Philippines and P300 million by its stores in California.

From July to September, Red Ribbon said its sales grew by 5 percent.

Red Ribbon has an estimated debt of P300 million in the last fiscal year. The amount was used for expansion activities.

Red Ribbon expects to spend up its expansion to the United States.

Red Ribbon is planning to put up three more in the Tri-State—in New York, New Jersey and in Virginia—to tap into the growing Filipino and Hispanic market here.

Red Ribbon expects to set up three stores in 12 months after the deal with Jollibee is finalized.

In the Philippines, Concepcion said it hopes to expand its store network by an additional 40 stores until 11 months. Red Ribbon has so far put up 77 booths and 3 stores in the last three months. The company is spending roughly P70 to 80 million for its store expansions in the country this year.

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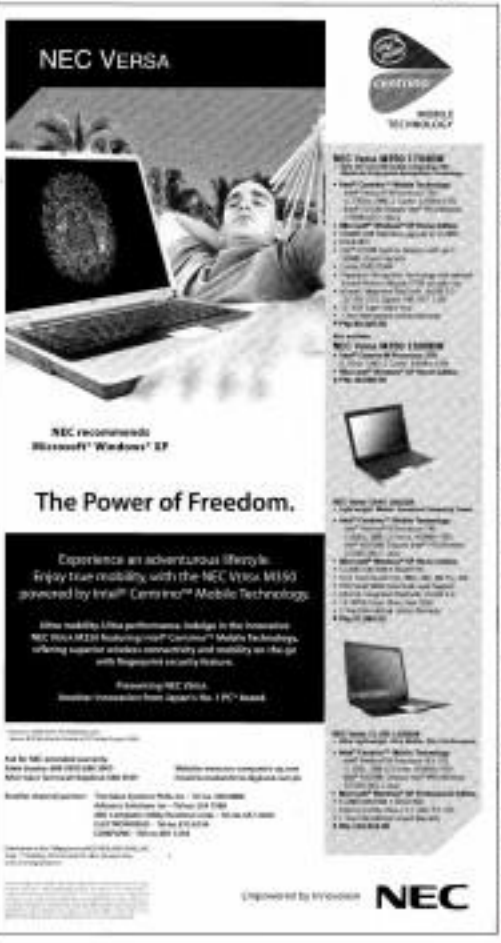
BUSINESS

Gov't scouts for new job markets abroad



By Aurora W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING AT NEW and emerging job markets overseas to avert lost to compensate for the potential loss of 55,000 jobs in Japan due to stricter rules affecting Filipino performance artists.

According to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, the agency was pursuing new and additional opportunities to create 65,000 jobs and to result in target of helping create 1.2 million jobs overseas yearly for Filipinos.

Officials are focusing on Brazil for carpenters; and tourism and construction workers; Macau for casino and hotel workers; Singapore and China for teachers; Australia, Norway, Trinidad and Tobago, and South Africa for healthcare workers.

Deputy Administrator Nasya and Canada islands for construction workers; Cayman Islands for restaurant workers; Bahamas for medical and skilled workers; United Kingdom for social workers and physical and occupational therapists; Iran for skilled workers, technicians/artisans; technical and professional workers in the oil, energy and construction sectors, according to the POEA.

POEA Deputy Administrator Carmelita S. Dimzon said in a briefing that the new laws deployed in 2008 consisted of workers engaged in services, professional and technical jobs, production, clerical work, sales, agricultural, and those hired for administrative and managerial positions.

Dimzon said a total of 384,012 new hires were deployed last year, on top of the 848,678 workers returning to their old jobs abroad. She said Filipinos continued to be competitive in terms of technical skills, English proficiency, Western-oriented education and training, their caring attitude, and adaptability to a multicultural environment.

However, she warned the following as some of the weaknesses of Filipino overseas workers: declining proficiency in English, declining quality of education and training, and are quick to go to third parties such as the courts to settle disputes with employers.

In a related development, the Department of Labor and Employment said at least 300 foreign employers from 60 international companies in Taiwan, Australia, the Middle East, Japan, the Caribbean, Europe and North America would visit the country next month to meet with licensed recruitment agencies for the manpower needs.

A hiring conference called "First International Labor Opportunities for Persons" would be held Nov. 9-11 at the Philippine International Convention Center.

TIGHTER rules in Japan may cost the jobs of thousands of Filipino performing artists.

Napocor gives rate discounts to ecozones, distressed firms

By Abigail L. Ho

RESPONDING TO CALLS FOR MORE COMpetitive power rates for exporters, National Power Corp. has extended special rates to at least seven economic zones in the country.

Napocor president Cyril Del Callar said in a letter to Trade Undersecretary Thomas Aquino that Napocor had been offering special and competitive rates to these ecozones since August.

Benefiting from the lower power rates are the Subic Bay Freeport in Zambales, the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga, the Cavite Export Processing Zone, the Bataan Export Processing Zone, the Baguio City Export Processing Zone and the Mactan I and II Export Processing Zones in Cebu. Del Callar, however, did not disclose the rates given to the zones.

He said Napocor was also considering providing discounts to export-oriented enterprises located in industrial estates.

These special discounts, he said, would help boost the competitiveness of the country's export sector. However, the rates are subject to negotiations.

The move is Napocor's response to President Maruyagad Arroyo's order for different government agencies to support the country's export sector and help local exporters become more globally competitive.

Napocor is also offering special rates to distressed industries.

Gov't debt hit ₱3.93T in July

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S OUTSTANding debt reached P3.93 trillion as of July this year.

Data from the Bureau of Treasury showed that the July debt figure reflected a 1.1-percent increase from the end-2012 level of P3.89 trillion.

Of the total debt figure as of July, P2.001 trillion came from domestic sources. This was 2.2 percent up from P1.958 trillion in the previous month.

Domestic borrowings were made through the sale of Treasury bills and bonds.

Foreign debt stood at P1.921 trillion, representing a 0.3-percent decline from the P1.926 trillion recorded in June.

Of the foreign debt, 57 percent was raised through issuance of foreign-currency denominated securities. The rest came from multilateral and bilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

Data showed that of the total national government debt as of July, 58.3 percent has long-term maturity, while 24.9 percent will mature in the medium term. Only 16.8 percent will mature in the short term.

A HALLOWEEN treat /C4

LIFESTYLE

Edit: Chelo Baird-Fontnos

THE PRICELESS sheet pangat's wingy with scallops and other seafood at Abuy's

ABOVE Marina Fuentes's memory for specialties

With all the possibilities, you won't know where to go first and when to go

Bacolod's restaurant row

Text and photos by Michaela Fenix

DELICIOUS Inasal's baked vegetables on leaves

BACOLOD IS A LAND OF EATING. That's what struck me when someone asked where I was having lunch the day of our arrival. The natural response to that query is: What can you offer?

If you do ask that, then prepare to be overwhelmed with suggestions. And then you won't know where to go first and what to go.

Abuy's had been recommended even before we stepped off the plane. And there he was, Abuy himself, also known as Noel or Ernesto, powering up the gate and driving us to the hotel. Everyone told what Abuy stands for and his ready answer is that when he was born, the nurse said, "It's a boy!"

There was no need for him to smile so much. He willingly went to his restaurant to indulge in the best that Negros had to offer—fish, shellfish, native chicken barbecue.

It was the grilled squid that made me close my eyes and enjoy the moment. It was tender, still moist, oozing of freshness. How does one achieve that perfect grilled quality? Abuy said the charcoal should be really hot. Raw cuts also should be grilled until it looked cooked. (Buy which the other side is grilled but only for half the time it took to cook the first side.

It's the same with fish. He explained that when you grill one side, the other side already starts cooking so you only need half the time.

As Abuy promised, we had sliced pangat's wings, a shellfish that hardly gets to Manila. The white shell is shaped like an angel's wing and the meat has a delicate flavor, not as strong as that of clam or mussel. It was the tail end of the diners' season and we were indeed lucky to have had some.

Each piece of the clean and fresh scallop was topped with fried garlic strips. Though delicious, I would have preferred to have both without the topping because garlic can overwhelm and you miss the true flavors of the shellfish.

When one enters the screened portion of Abuy's Restaurant, there's a row of framed (color coded) diagrams of the cooked food for that day. We looked for what everyone said was the really special dish, squid but cooked in squid ink (adobo). It was all gone (dang because everyone before us ordered it or because there weren't enough squid to squander the bit out of that day).

We ended with dessert from the Eduardo Gaisano A. Foot. Bigger than the ones we had a few weeks earlier in Cotabato and Davao, it was a Thai variety, hardly sweet and less creamy. Little did we know that dessert was not a closing dessert for dinner as it made us even more full and therefore more sweet than we wanted to be on our first evening. (Abuy's Restaurant, Lakeside Subdivision Compound)

Adobo variation

Since our visit was a working trip (for the Bacolod culinary competition, more on that next time), our host for every meal-occasion, bound through for many gratification, Someone suggested we should eat pinoy. And Buyanan Inn was the place to taste pinoy which is quite adobo that has been shredded then fried. It comes on top of fried rice, crunchy crushing dishes.

But it was the lunch —boiled vegetables with a lot of shrimp—that impressed me. It was chock-a-block with a host of vegetables because the vegetables were fresh, probably just picked that day. My aunt tried Lechon, the Negros version of Cebu lechon or boiled beef dish. (Buyanan Inn, Lacson Street)

Café Calea was highly recommended by our host, Red Hilbero or Cora. For its pineapple, which she described as a pie that made the pineapple taste rich together as the consistent way. And she was right. Yummy second helpers, and too-

MAIN FEATURES /C2

SAMPLING at Café Casa

A SMALL portion of what was served at Abby's

SAMPLING the pies at El Ideal Bakery

Bacolod's restaurant row

From page C1

BOB and Cynthia Ibiangos Magdalena show off their pizza at Cafe Bob's.

GARING na bangus at The Quiet Place

sauce, lovely crust. Later, the cooks with us told Cruz that the sticky quality she liked in the pecan pie was Cane syrup. Sur sacrificed with just the pie, we were through baked cheesecake, heavy lemongrass and chocolate cake to spare. (Café Casa, Lourdes C building, Lacson St.)

Inasal warehouse

Manokan Country is the warehouse of inasal chicken and shouldn't be trained because it has several versions of this seasoned flavored barbecue dish.

We entered Aida's at Manokan Country where the normal lunch hour had finished.

Our efficient waitress first wanted us to try the cassava packed near the restroom. Of course we wanted those and they were indeed wonderful.

Next, we ordered our chicken parts. The waitress knew we were Tagalog and couldn't understand terms like bitukon so she brought out samples of the parts on skewers. Our inihaw inihaw sticks arrived, all still hot off the grill so it was difficult to use our fingers. Those who ordered fried rice loved the fried garlic pieces on top. Those who didn't, put achuete oil on their plain rice, which was just as deadly because it's actually mixed into the pinoy rice when it is boiled. In addition to CEO, because it looks like the water oil. (Manokan Country, Reclamation Area)

Inasal's dessert was biniukyo from a vendor at the door. It's binlo-binlo, or elongated doughnut, and it tasted and acted like binlo. And then we went for a sweet sensation dessert at Abby's.

It was Cruz's gift of tapioleros a few weeks before that made Abby's a must. Each piece has very delicate layers of pastry, a thin cream in between, then topped with sublime sugar icing. Her tea sweet, the pieces melt in the mouth and so disappear right away.

The restaurant's interior was impressive—high-ceiling, wrought-iron chairs, white sidewalls. Many themed restaurants take pains to be beautifully designed. So Sugarland lived up to design to service, catching a glimpse of the coffee shop before going to a gala dinner, we were amazed by its very own look. The wall of sculptured waves reminded me of Delle at the Peninsula Hotel in Hong Kong.

Abby's Half Moon, a light cake with one iced top, and pistol cake (above) also sampled with good coffee served with hot milk that upped the restaurant's rating in my eyes. (2b1b corner Lacson Street)

Paris of Negros

After wrapping up the competition, Cruz brought us to Silay City for a mini tour of what was once regarded as the Paris of Negros. The old stately houses were seen in the dying sunlight that made the atmosphere more eerie. But always the best stop in Silay City is El Ideal, the landmark bakery that has been churning bigtas favorites for the past 80 years. The building is how I remembered it from the last visit a decade ago but Negrenses will say it looks like it has been spic-span.

Called the best one side of the road and, in the end, old-fashioned cookies that evoke warm cities of old: pancake-like—macaroon-shaped pastries, crusty biscuits, white sugar-smeared barbados. It's tempting to buy everything but there's always the lack of space in your baggage to hold purchases.

The table was full of El Ideal specialties. The bake pie had layers of young coconut instead of the tuna and pieces with lots of munch found elsewhere. The tempting sliced, said to have been invented in Silay, came cold from the refrigerator. And the bakery's best invention, the guapple pie, made from the generic apple fruit, assisted (no sweet fruit day), the cheese on top lacking salt bites. (El Ideal Bakery Hind Street, Silay City)

Too full

A few lunch and several stopovers for tasting made us too full to have dinner. We stopped by Café Bob's just to look at the place, being told it was the the place to go for pastries and coffee. We parked ourselves in the deli section, just outside, the wood-burning oven cooked pizzas.

Though we were full, the aroma of freshly done pizza was too tempting and soon turned the untired cheese on that crisp crust. We felt comfortable there, and the owners, Bob and Cynthia Ibiangos Magdalena, made sure we were. (Café Bob's, 23rd Lacson Street)

Before our flight back the next day, we had breakfast at The Quiet Place in Bago, 20 minutes outside Bacolod City. It's a farm with a gas with rice fields lining the road going to the receiving area. We walked through the parimary food with trees, orchids and other flowers going toward the coffee shop. It was hardly quiet but the noise was welcome—the chirping of birds. Going to bangus, fruit juice, tinapoon, pepsis and coffee would include us through a late lunch accompanied by a relaxed flight. (The Quiet Place Farm Resort Barangay Tabunan, Bago City)

There were other recommendations which we had no time for but we made a mental note to try them the next time we are in the neighborhood.

EL IDEAL: Guapple pie packaged as go

Cookware for a lifetime of good eating

By Miggy Escaros
Lifestyle Editor

BEKA, AN INTERNATIONAL CULINARY brand in stainless steel cookware, is now available in the Philippines.

With its durability and timeless design, Beka is the choice of professionals in the culinary industry. At the same time, it is widely used by families who rely on quality cookware to create the perfect home-cooked meal.

Good investment

"Quality cookware is a good investment," said Ari Stamoulis, Beka head of sales for Asia and the Middle East.

"Beka cookware is made to last. We give a 25-year guarantee for our products," Dean Stamoulis added.

Beka was established in Germany in 1899. Two industrialists, Bernd Braun and Jakob Kreindler, made the company known for making enamel cookware. Today, the company specializes in manufacturing high quality 18/10 (i.e., 18 per cent of stainless steel), 18/0 (i.e., 18 per cent chromium that makes steel stainless, while 10 refers to nickel that gives a silvery sheen). Its reputation is unmatched in Europe and its products are sold in many countries around the world.

Known for elegant yet durable workmanship, Beka's features include an extra-thick encapsulated sandwich base that is suitable for all heat sources including induction, ergonomic riveted "easy use" cast handles, inside capacity marks to indicate volume, a steam hole on the lid, and an attractive and elegant high-polished look.

"Beka combines three elements: American marketing, European R&D (research and development), and Asian ambition... Beka cookware is made in China," said Stamoulis.

"Our aim is to make Beka a world-known brand name," she added.

Cooking demo

Beka cookware held a cooking demo recently at 101 Pinoy Chefs on Fire "Hy Naco"), an Italian restaurant at The Peninsula Manila Hotel in Makati City.

Michele Mingucci, resident chef of Mi Piace, demonstrated the versatility and dependability of Beka products.

For an audience of hungry journalists, Mingucci produced three delectable dishes: Chilean sea bass on spring vegetables, shrimp ravioli, and French crepes.

Mingucci loves to be creative and, in his restaurant, "play with food." Mentioning an ambivalent in his kitchen. He loves to experiment with tastes and presentation.

The chef said he relished creating new ways to enjoy conventional Italian food. He did this by infusing "cultural fusion" into his cooking. Mingucci drew inspiration from the techniques he learned while working in a number of locations, including the Restaurant Infrarotstube, which has three Michelin stars, in Germany and the Restaurant Montparnasse in the Italian alps, where he worked as a sous-chef during the winter season.

Beka cookware has two product lines available in stores: Beka Classic and Beka Line. Both lines have a variety of pots and pans that cater to every need. Every collection includes, among others, fry pans, skillets, casseroles, and double boilers—items essential to any kitchen.

Beka is exclusively distributed in the Philippines by Ruslan Marketing Corp. For inquiries, call 8907755.

Visit www.beka-cookware.com.

Arugula salad with mango, parma ham, and light balsamic dressing

500 g arugula salad
Balsamic dressing (see below)
150 g parma ham
2 pcs ripe mango

Balsamic Dressing Recipe:

50 ml balsamic vinegar
50 ml olive oil
20 ml vegetable oil
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt
20 g pepadew mustard

Mix all the ingredients well with the whisk and leave 30 minutes to rest. Every time you need it remember to mix it properly, otherwise the oil and the vinegar will separate.

For the salad: Keep the salad always in the fridge.

When you are ready to prepare the dish, add the dressing and toss it well.

Heat up the sliced parma ham —either in the oven or in a pot—and add it to the salad.

Add the sliced mango and mix them all together in a big bowl or a slightly hollowed big plate.

Sprinkle with shaved parmigiano.

Serve as soon as possible.

Ravioli of mushrooms with prawns, cherry tomatoes, in olive oil sauce

Pasta Dough for Ravioli

3 eggs
150 g white flour
150 g of semolina flour
2 tbsp warm water
filling for ravioli:
300 g of mix mushrooms
Chopped mix herbs and garlic
Salt and pepper
½ glass white wine
Butter
8 pcs prawns medium size
Cherry tomatoes
Parsley chopped
Olive oil
Garlic
Mushrooms

Beka, the German-made stainless steel pots and pans, are guaranteed for 25 years

For the dough, mix all the ingredients and work into a pasta for at least 15 minutes. Let it rest.

In the meantime prepare the filling. Sauté until the garlic and mushrooms in olive oil. Add a little white wine and cook slowly.

Make the ravioli 2½ inches long. They must be square. Four to five pieces each will be enough.

Put the water, sauté the prawns in garlic and olive oil then add the mushrooms and the wine reduction and add the cherry tomatoes.

Add salt and pepper.

Cook the ravioli in boiling salted water for five minutes.

Pour ravioli into the sauce and serve while hot.

Serves four.

MI PIACE Italian-born chef Michele Mingucci (left) demonstrates the simplicity of creating sumptuous dishes using Beka cookware.

BEKA'S Sales Asia and Middle East head Ari Stamoulis shows some of Beka's quality cookware pieces.

Baye-baye, a Halloween dish

PDI FAMILY RECIPES CONTEST

By Sonia G. Cayo

OUR FAMILY ONCE OWNED A traditional grinder made of stone. It was used to grind rice, corn or coffee.

I often remember it when I think about how we used to grind rice, in mini-quantities for Baye-Baye, known as Binagu in Pangasinan.

I remember our old folk's tradition in Antique to have the "Pinagpayag" after the first harvest of the year as a form of thanksgiving and offering to God as we prepared for abundant harvest for the whole year.

One of the dishes offered was the Baye-Baye from the newly harvested and ground malagkit rice mixed with young coconut meat and muscovado sugar.

The delightful aroma of roasted rice before it is ground into powder will already whet your appetite. Often, the dish is served to family gatherings such as birthdays, Christmas, Easter Sunday and most especially Tsikot Luz Santos. Halloween would not be complete without Baye-Baye.

ALL THE ingredients are put in a wooden mortar and pestle for pounding.

Baye-Baye

¼ kilo uncooked sugar
1 k ground toasted malagkit rice
5 pcs grated young coconut

Materials:

Cooking utensils
Wooden mortar and pestle
Coconut grater

Soak malagkit rice in water for 30 minutes. Drain excess water. Roast the rice until brownish in color. Set aside to cool and grind.

Grate the young coconut.

Mix the ground rice with grated coconut and muscovado sugar inside the wooden mortar and pestle while pounding until done.

Remove the mixture Baye-Baye from the mortar and roll to balance leaves and slits to desired.

BAYE-BAYE

Win SM Supermarket gift checks

LIFESTYLE IS LOOKING FOR recipes that use traditional Filipino technologies and ingredients.

Send us your family recipes and, if your entry is chosen, you can win P2,000 worth of SM Supermarket gift checks, a gift from Innoffice or a class of choice at the Reggie Aquino School of Culinary Arts.

Tell us who in your family first cooked and served the recipe; how many generations have cooked it; when it is usually cooked and served.

Include a photo of the dish and your name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address, if any.

Entries can be mailed or delivered to: PDI Family Recipes Contest, c/o Lifestyle, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 1000 Chino Roces Ave., Makati City 1200. E-mail: at cwipes@inquirer.com.ph. For contact details, e-mail lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph.

Winners may claim their prizes from the PDI marketing office.

Enjoy traditional Kapampangan buffet

THE ELLIEZ POLMERION, INC. IS HOSTing Pasanggiyan Fiesta 2003, a lunch/buffet of traditional Pampangan dishes, 11 a.m.–4 p.m., Oct. 25, at the 1800s Ashay na bato Bale Matua in the Clark Special Economic Zone, Angeles City.

Among the delicacies to be featured is the *sarmoro* in sweet cocktail.

The festival aims to help raise funds for the establishment of the first culinary museum in the country to be housed in the 1930s edition Mauro-ning Angeles.

Other traditional Pampangan dishes will be donated by local residents, among them *Sandiwe* well-guarded secret recipes like the *cornarit*, lechon or stuffed frogs, *pakil* or bats salad, kalderetang kambing, lechon or sizzling rice, fried catfish with *Asla-bala* or fermented rice, *binatang tamok* or chicken cooked in bamboo, green papaya lumpia, calabong puso or quail, pinikpikang dinuguan with carabao's milk, *Halan-ga* aon or pork innards salabat, *bbak-bbol* or carabao's milk custard and, of course, Pampanga's legendary *Asla-bala* served with *patchiran de leche*.

Tickets are available at P500 each on a first-come, first-served basis.

A guided heritage tour of old houses and the Center for Kapampangan Research at the Holy Angel University will also be arranged for those interested.

Call 045-8874703 or 0922-8189500. E-mail bestasalmo@yahoo.com

Seminar on food hygiene in catering

LEARN THE PRINCIPLES AND practices of effective food hygiene in catering in the "Hygienic Food Safety Seminar—*A Guide to Food Handlers*," 1–5 p.m., Oct. 29-31.

Find out how to prevent foodborne diseases like E. coli, salmonella, etc. The class will be conducted by Vivien E. Mangalindan, TQM Services executive director for Asia-Pacific region.

"Basic Plastering and Rationalizing," 9 a.m.–4 p.m., Oct. 27 and 28, covers basic set-up, techniques for suggestive selling, proper serving and handing out, napkin folding and dusting, bar tools and glassware, classification of wine and spirits, simple garnish.

Acquire knowledge skills through "Basic Cooking," 9 a.m.–2 p.m., Oct. 27–28. The class covers proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; proper mis-en-place of mirepoix, stocks, soups, sauces, marinades, use of herbs and spices combinations, proper purchasing, storage, techniques of dressing and boning poultry, filleting fish and meat fabrication. Mix & Match workbooks will be given away.

Visit Rhys Kitchen (Thursday-Saturday), A/8, Library Building, A. Arnaiz Avenue (formerly Buendia Road), Makati City or call 8921185 or 8922501 local 106, E-mail salesdesk@rhysmanila.com.ph.

Cooking up a feast

THE REGGIE AQUINO School of Culinary Arts offers the following classes:

Oct. 25—Mom and Me: On-Thanksgiving Feast: Cell vowel—Cream of Scallop Cappuccino Soup, Chilled Prawn Salad, Mom's Traditional Almond Turkey with Chestnut Stuffing Served with Gravy and Plum Cranberry Sauce and Almond Mashed Root Vegetables, Pumpkin Pots Crème-rolle, Mom's Caramel Apple Pie with Homemade Queso Ice Cream.

Oct. 25—Pitchin' Done My Way...Crisp Fried Lechon de Leche Done My Way Served Shrimp Duck Apple with Mousseade Pistachio and L2 cocco

Oct. 24—Soft Bread Making Workshop Ready On—make your own and bring home delicious bread. Two Dough Recipes and Variations, Honey Loaf, Dinner Rolls, Cheese Rolls, Garlic and Herb

Oct. 30—Wood Chip Smoked!! Call cave!!—Learn to perfect the art of smoking. Sun-Dried Homemade Smoked Salmon with Condiments, Wood Chip Roast Chicken, Smoked Ribs Tex Mex Style, Wood Chip Roasted Duck with Orange Sauce, Whole Wood Chip Roasted Lamb. Sauces and Side Dishes

Call 9209296, 9223088, 4333142, 6374744, 0917-8399888.